

TRENDS AS A CONCRETE HELP OF FUTURES
THINKING FOR ORGANIZATIONS
- *HOW COULD TRENDS BECOME UNDERSTOOD
AND UTILIZED BETTER?*

Susanna Björklund

139117

Aalto University

School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Master's Thesis, Visual Culture

28.3.2013

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on trend analysis and trends in general as a means of helping organizations to get insight of futures. Trends are looked at from a client's point of view as well as the point of view of a professional trend analyst. Having worked with trends for years in many fields from fashion designer to a journalist and a lecturer specializing in futures trends, I have had the opportunity to observe the field from many different angles. The field of trend research and analysis is vast and overflowing with information. A trend can be anything from a fashion trend to a social trend or a megatrend.

The work for this thesis has been conducted using several methods; discussions with the management of organizations, trend professionals, students and others interested in trends. I have interviewed trend analysts and participated in trend seminars and design fairs around the world. Theoretical literature and relevant articles have been looked into. Finally, students have been questioned to gain more information needed for this study. Furthermore, I have observed and scanned for changes, the crucial elements of emerging trends.

The research questions of this study are:

- 1. What is the current understanding of trends?**
- 2. Why is it difficult to understand trends and utilize them?**
- 3. How could trends be translated into a more concrete form so that they would be of better use for people/ organizations? Can visuality be of help here?**

My conclusions are that the field of trends is very broad, context bound, heterogeneous and vague. Even theoretical books and articles use different terminology when they are referring to same matters and vice versa. It has been a surprise to notice how difficult it is even for the management in the design field to understand trends, what they are and where they come from. The contextual review pointed out how highly fragmented and controversial the field is. Trend analysis professionals and strategists are aware of that and therefore actions have been taken to clarify the language, as well as methods of trend research and analysis via networking. There are hunches and tacit knowledge always involved in analyzing trends, obviously solid data from the futures cannot exist, that probably adds to the confusion and adds suspicions towards the subject.

Trends need systemic translating by a professional to be understood, not everyone can be or even become a trendspotter. Explaining trends with a broader context to other fields i.e. social, political and financial, helps to gain insight to the matter. Giving existing benchmarks from various fields backing an idea of a useful trend is also a good tool to make trends concrete and more comprehensive. Using visuality; moodboards, pictures and infographics linked with the articulated trend is a crucial element of understanding and making use of them. Last but not least, for an organization to utilize trends, trust is what is needed from the management. Intangible and tacit knowledge are an inseparable part of dealing with the futures, as there is no data available. There is always an element of risk involved when dealing with the possible futures .

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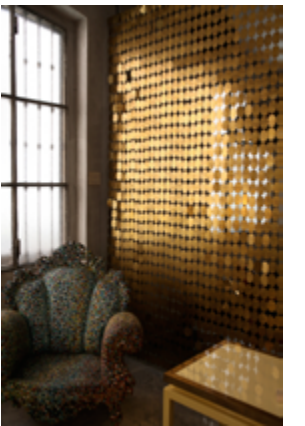
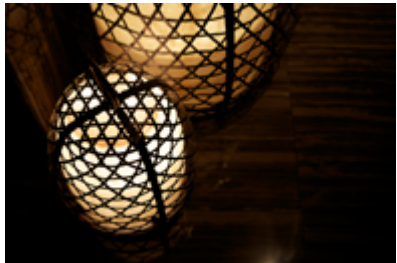
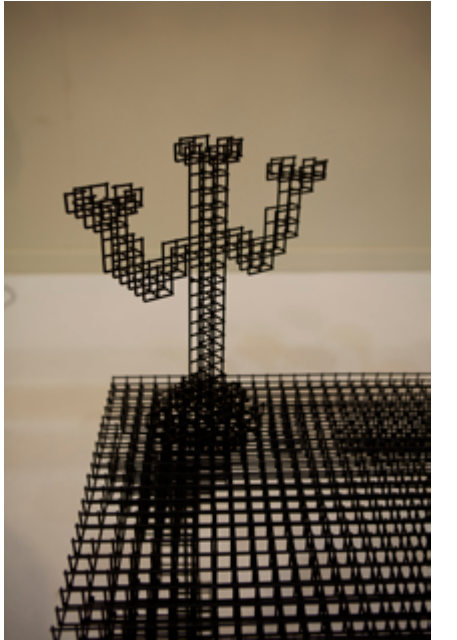
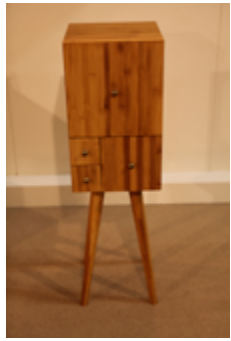
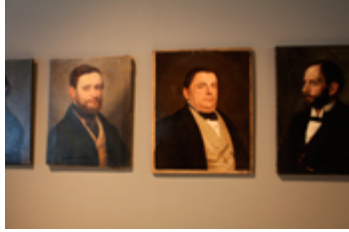
1. INTRODUCTION

As a fashion designer, I used to travel to Paris for fashion fairs together with the rest of the team I worked with: the product manager and the production director etc. At the end of a long day, after walking around looking at the countless fashion companies’ stalls and shops, we used to sit down over the dinner table to discuss what we had seen. Our experiences were very different. Without exception we had seen or paid attention to totally diverse things. I realized then that trends and understanding trends are related to who you are and what you see. While I was looking for changes, small indications of change, something new and emerging, the rest of the team was looking for elements there were plenty of, or elements they had seen before, that they considered ‘Commercial’. The fact that successful companies had already manufactured the products, made them trustworthy and commercially safe.

Although a designer bases some ideas on hunches, the decisions and suggestions are based on the company policy; the price level, the style and the target groups. It is of mutual interest to be as commercial as possible. It was my job as a designer to come up with ideas that were new and “trendy” but also commercial at the same time. However, it was a challenge to convince the management to accept ideas that were based on hunches. Management is responsible for making financial resolutions, therefore making decisions based on something not yet existing is not easy.

The same challenges can apply to innovations. There is ‘Hype’ and a lot of discourse also on utilizing or coming up with innovations, but executing them into products or services requires trust and will to take risks on all levels.

8



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1.1

ABOUT TRENDS

Trends are everywhere. Google search engine finds 652 000 000 results in 0.27 seconds for the word "trend". There are the latest trends of spring fashion in women's magazines as well as the trend of our society aging, and everything in between. Interesting though, that in both in French and Italian the word "Trends" is "Tendences" and "Tendenze" which literally in English translate as "Tendencies". Trend research is definitely a growing business on many levels from predicting fashion to research trying to come up with innovations or attempting to gain insight into solving social, political and economical problems. The field is blurry and vast; there is never just one trend of the moment.

Having been a fashion designer, stylist, production designer, a journalist specialized in futures trends, fashion and design, as well as a lecturer for years, I have had an opportunity to use trends in many disciplines and occasions. All kinds of trends have always been intriguing topics to me. Not just fashion related ones but all kinds of trends; the megatrends changing the world slowly, the consumer changes and the changing values in the society. When I studied fashion design in the 80's there was no discourse on ecological or sustainable issues, we were interested in beautiful, good quality clothes. Looking at it now from a lecturer's point of view, for the fourth year fashion design students, sustainability issues are as natural an ingredient of the design process as shape, material or design itself.

With the on-going financial crisis, many organizations are trying to find new ways of working, to come up with new innovations in order to differentiate themselves from the competitors or to get reassurance to which direction one should go. Out-of-the-Box thinking is often mentioned in the internal meetings of many organizations. Looking systematically into the new trends might offer one solution to gain insight.

We live in an abundance of information. At times it is difficult to find and choose the valid information from the overflow. A lot of statistics and data are used to back up decisions, but sometimes there is a need of trusting decisions on hunches and weak signals. In Finland there is a saying; "I believe it when I see it". It requires courage to make decisions based on something vague and not very concrete. It probably helps if someone has been mapping the alternatives and already made a valid selection of the information available and interpreted it into a comprehensive, visual and tangible form.

The world changes and I have a hunch that changes in the fashion world act, to some extent anyway, as a mirror for the emerging changes in the society in general. This study does not go into or refer to colours and shapes in the fashion related trends, although they too reflect on the changes of the society.

This study looks at those fashion related trends that are linked with the changes in manufacturing, marketing, selling and consuming as well as the discourse related to fashion and textile trends in general. The fashion and design world works in rapid cycles and has many controversial aspects within the industry. In Finland there are certain companies that sell fashion or design related presentations of futures trends for clients, mainly for the design business. But few organizations in other fields of business utilize futures related information interpreted from fashion and design trends. Trends in general seem to have an aura of being something not very easy to understand.

One reason adding to the confusion about trends, especially at an organizational level, is the actual word. "Trend" has a shallow and a superficial connotation. (Dumitrescu, 2011). The reason for this is most likely the strong link between fashion and trends.

My original idea for this study was to create a tool where these fashion and design related benchmarks are used as an example to gather information, backed with other examples of emerging changes, aimed then for any field of business for help.

I noticed, however, that the field of trends is extremely wide and difficult to understand. This applies to fashion as well. The length of a skirt or the latest fad seems to be the only things people link with fashion. Even some professionals in the design business have difficulties making use of trend information, as it is so vague and fragmented. People also tend to trust the existing facts only, as mentioned before.

I decided therefore to change the objective of this study and look into the current understanding of the trends from many fields (not just fashion). To look into what makes trends so difficult to understand and to think what might help in making trends more comprehensible. My aim is to little by little create a tool called ENNE that makes the process of trend analysis more comprehensible. Gathering preliminary insight for that at the end of this research is an additional bonus.

1.2

THE COMPLEXITY OF TRENDS

The term “Trend” means different things to different people. Trends are used in a wide context in Fashion, Politics and Economics. Vejlgard (2008, 20) says that the concept of change is an essential part of the definition of trends. A trend is not always tangible. According to Raymond (2010,14), a trend can be emotional, intellectual and even spiritual. Dumitrescu (2011, 23) writes that trends are generally divided into sizes affected by time: megatrends, macrotrends and microtrends. Megatrends affect many aspects of society, they can be political, economical and technological. They usually last decades. A macrotrend has a life span between two to five years. It might grow into a megatrend, if it starts to spread wider and begins to affect more people.

1.2.1

CAN ONE PREDICT THE FUTURE?

It has been argued and still is, whether it is at all possible to predict the future. ‘Edge’ is an online forum for thinkers and scientists. Once a year, a certain question is asked of 150 thinkers and a book is compiled from the answers. In 2008, the question and the name of the book was “What have you changed your mind about?” Ed Regis, a science writer and author of What is Life? writes that he has changed his mind about whether it is possible to predict the future. He argues that “The universe is a complex system, in which countless causal chains act and interact simultaneously, the ultimate nature of some of them unknown to science even today.” Based on that complexity, he argues that it will be difficult if not impossible to have any assurance what the future state of the system might become. (Regis 2008, 59-60)

Trend Analysis is about trying to get insight into what the future might hold for us. However, the future will be a continuation of the past and present. With certain methods and skills it is possible to see a change/ changes occurring. It might not be possible to forecast futures as such, but using multidisciplinary research together with a creative group of professional people and keeping eyes open to change, it is possible to gain insights of what changes might occur and what effect they might have in the possible futures. Existing surveys, research results and scientific data from different fields are always used as base, but the element of intangible and tacit knowledge is also a part of the process. There are no trends without people analyzing them. There are Trend Scouts, Trend Experts, Trend Analysts, Trend Researchers and Futurists. All doing the same, up to a certain point, they are looking for a change.

trend analyst fad

innovator trend

strategist analysis

forecaster vision

futures researcher

weak signal

trend specialist emerging issue

trend scout

coolhunter

trend creator

trendsetter

early adopter

early follower laggard

early majority late follower

early mainstreamer late majority

late mainstreamer

anti-innovator

conservative

political

microtrend social

macrotrend technological

megatrend economical

1.2.2

TREND RELATED ARTICULATION,
INFORMATION, INSIGHT, TREND

Raymond (2010,40) cites Fawkes in making a distinction between information and insight. "Information can tell you that a market has potential, insight how to make that potential profitable."

Forecasting and foresight are also divided. Dumitrescu (2011, 186) cites Cuhls: "In forecasting you already know what you are looking at but in foresight you are searching for what you have to look at." Nuutinen (2004,18-19) cites Webster's dictionary and writes that forecasting means: "Anticipating the consequences of something and preparing oneself". She continues that in foresight-thinking social, technological, scientific and economical issues are considered to form a systemic entity where the present time is linked with the futures. Dumitrescu (2011, 186) sees that forecasting is about predicting one future (only one scenario) whereas foresight is identifying possible plural future states (alternative future scenarios). Sometimes there is no data available for that. (ibid.)

One aspect relating to the difficulty of understanding trends is that people see things differently. People often see what they are made to see or perhaps what they want to see. Fashion trends are a good example here. The fashion field is huge; there are many levels of fashion from Haute Couture to mass-market fashion in the supermarkets. One pays attention to the issues that feel relevant. Somebody fond of animal prints, will spot them season after season. Within the huge fashion market, there are bound to be a certain number of designers each season using animal prints, therefore this person can claim to be fashionable always.

To make things more complicated, there is often a trend and almost opposite counter trend to a phenomenon i.e. technical innovations and the need to downshift and go back to basics to a simple life.

1.2.3

ON HUNCHES AND INTUITIONS

As futures are not here yet, part of the trend analysis, no matter what field of business we are referring to, has a link to hunches and assumptions. That adds to the mystical and suspicious aura of the trends.

Raymond (2010, 68) refers to some individuals for whom intuitive forecasting comes effortlessly. The intuitive forecasters are natural talents, they exercise their physical, intellectual and emotional skills and seem to make the right decision and come to conclusions without a 'rational' process. Raymond thinks this is one of the key reasons why outside of the creative industries, trend forecasting of this kind feels suspicious to many.

1.3.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to gain more insight into what trends really are and how they work, as well as why they have an aura of being difficult to understand and utilize. This study looks into the current field of trends, what are considered to be trends, what sort of person is a Trend Spotter and how trends are researched or forecasted. The aim is to find insight and ideas into what is needed to back up a trend, for it to become clearer to communicate and why it would be worth while, and, at best, an asset for the business of an organization. The world is becoming more visual. Could that be used as a tool? The problem is looked at from two different perspectives, that of a client and of a trend professional.

The problem is how to make sense to a highly heterogeneous field, which has an aura of being a bit mystical and even nonsense. A forecaster works collecting fragments of information from many diverse fields, mapping and clustering interesting and valid data together and making conclusions based on that. The approach for this study is the same: to look into as many fields of the trend world as possible.

My research questions are:

1. **What is the current understanding of trends?**
2. **Why is it difficult to understand trends and utilize them?**
3. **How could trends be translated into a more concrete form so that they would be of better use for people/ organizations? Can visuality be of help here?**

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1

INTRODUCTION TO METHODOLOGY

This study has taken a phenomenological approach. Collis & Hussey, (2003, 53) write that a phenomenological paradigm assumes that social reality is in our minds. That seems highly relevant to the research of the trends as they are value ridden, emotional, cultural issues and extremely subjective as the literature points out. Practices of seeing are a part of it. Collis & Hussey (2003, 48) suggest that on the other hand researchers as well have values, although they may not be explicit. This study is trying to make sense of this context bound process, which in addition includes elements that are not tangible and tacit knowledge. In order to accomplish that, several methods have been used. Action research and participatory observation have been significant components of this study. The learning has been practice based.

This study looks into the field of trends from many perspectives, studies what trends are and how they are researched in general. The study tries to answer why trends are so difficult to comprehend and what could be done to improve the situation. My assumption is that trends are fragmented, vague and blurry. Therefore the framework of this study is built with mixed methods, literature and observation. The approach is highly subjectivist, based on working in the trend field for years, as a Designer, Journalist and Trend Analyst. Informal qualitative mini questionnaires have been applied to give extra insight to the topic. The literature review maps the research topic and identifies the gap in the existing literature that my research addresses. It is also necessarily hermeneutic as I try to gain personal understanding of the nature of trends and the problems of their research.

The hypothesis of the study is that trends, often seen from a limited perspective as shallow expressions of people's commercial desires, need to be studied more rigorously. The approach for this study is interpretivist (Collis & Hussey, 2003, 47) as trends are such complex, diverse and context bound and my approach necessarily subjective. A broader philosophical perspective is needed to interpret the in many cases intangible aspects of this study.

2.2

EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH

Collis & Hussey (2003, 48) suggest that epistemology is concerned with the scope of knowledge, questioning what knowledge is and what one accepts to be valid knowledge. The epistemological assumption is that the process of trend analysis in general, and especially the research for this study has been interactive. I have used participatory observation for it. My approach for this study is based on the assumption that seeing and comprehending trends are highly personal and subjective. The research for this study assumes that seeing trends is both value-laden and biased from the perspective of the researcher.

Perceiving trends is linked with personality as Vejlggaard (2008,76-77) notes. Sturken and Cartwright (2001, 57) argue that decoding an image happens always both consciously and unconsciously and that (2001, 31) part of the pleasure of looking at an image is that cultural, social and historical meanings happen without us noticing the process. The same appears to happen with trends. Qualitative small questionnaires have been conducted as well as discussions with trend professionals, management and people generally interested in trends. Hunches and tacit knowledge are also a significant part of the field of reflection in this study. The methodological process has been context bound, involving learning by doing. (Collis & Hussey, (2003, 49)

2.3

METHODS OF PRACTICE

As mentioned before, my background as a Designer, a Journalist specialized in futures trends and design as well as a Lecturer, has given me the opportunity to examine and follow trends from various different angles. The different job descriptions require different approaches or focus towards working with, scanning, analyzing and utilizing trends.

As a Fashion Designer, the work with a new collection always started off with a look into new trends and moods, analyzing them, choosing ones that matched the company's concept, price level, target groups and business. The trends involved and analyzed related mainly to fashion and design. But ideas were also taken from art, music, books or poems at times. Creating visual mood boards to illustrate the ideas for the whole team was the following, extremely important step. Over the years, visualizing mood boards has been a routine that has helped me in several work disciplines and which I have used in fields where it is not so common, like journalism. In fashion design the outcome is highly visual.

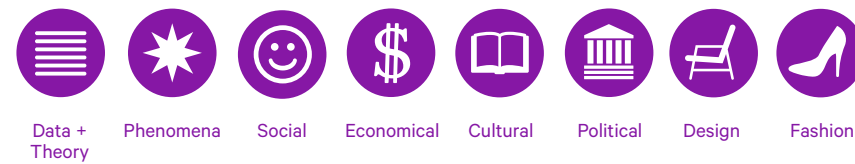
As a Journalist I have attended trend seminars and interviewed professional trend analysts as well as designers all over the world. On top of that I have designed and produced visual fashion and interior editorials for magazines. Certain assignments have required looking into specific data and interviewing specialists who might have opposite views of a certain subject. The approach has been more holistic; looking into values and emerging issues ranging from fashion, design as well as cultural, social, economical and political fields.

As a Stylist and a Production Designer for TV-commercials and music videos, there has been yet another approach to following trends. Visual ambiance has been in the centre point. Changes in the visual world, relating to film, photography as well as fashion, subcultures, music etc. have been looked into and portrayed in a highly visual form for the team.

FASHION DESIGNER



JOURNALIST



STYLIST & PRODUCTION DESIGNER



TEACHER & LECTURER



As a Teacher I have tried to get a wide perception of all kinds of changes within the society as well as looking into interesting phenomena from everywhere around us. The focus there has been on how to translate the knowledge of trends into a form students can best comprehend. Part of the offering there is always linked with theory. The same applies in the work of a Lecturer of Futures Trends for various organizations.

Due to the fact that trends are intriguing for me and for many others, there have been many discussions amongst people from various disciplines. Travelling is another substantial part of the work relating to trends. Observing people on the street, visiting art exhibitions, shops and restaurants has a tendency to reinforce hunches. The world getting more and more virtual, digital as well as smaller with all the information available, does not replace the importance of personal experiences as part of the trend process.

The research questions have thus arisen from the challenges I have faced in my work.

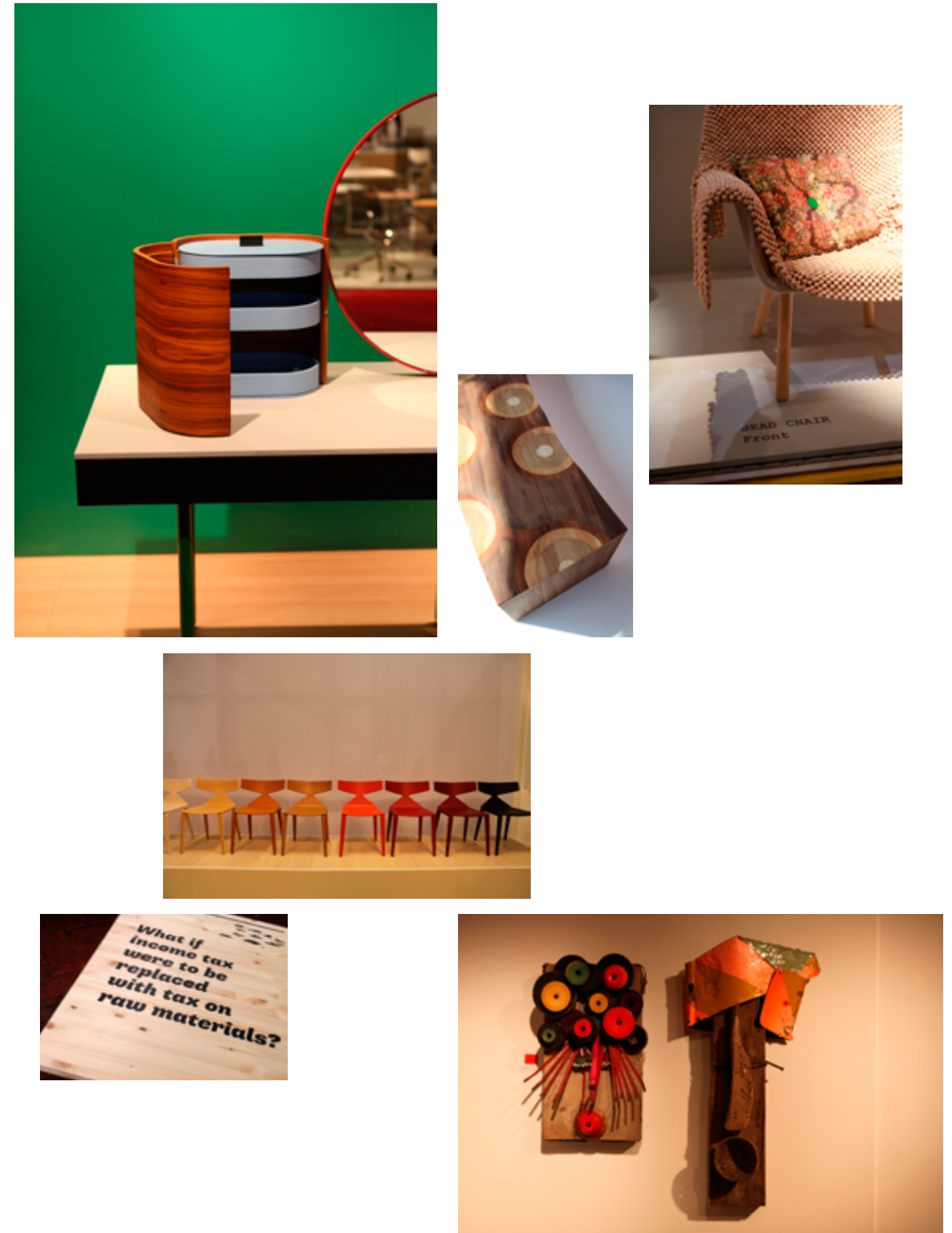
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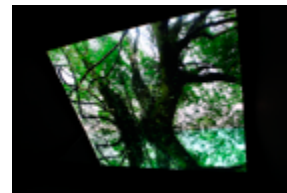
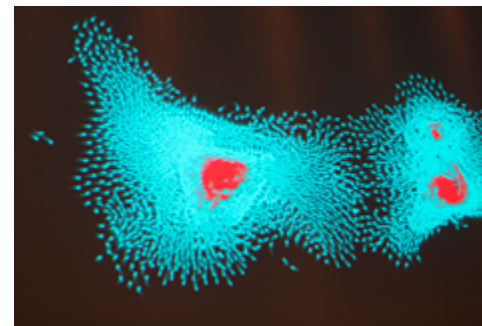
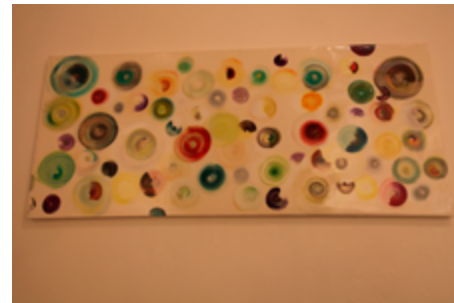
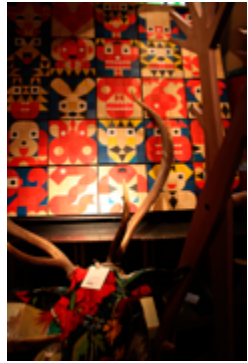
RESEARCH METHODS FOR THIS STUDY

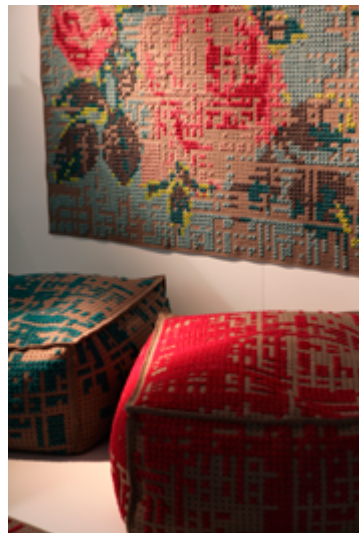
Mixed methods have been used for this study. As mentioned before the trend field is exceedingly wide, scattered and complex. Forecasters search for fragments of information about the subject from many different angles and areas not necessarily related, also use their hunches and tacit knowledge, then cluster the gained relevant information and form a final analysis. Same approach for research applies to this study. Some of these fragments mentioned might seem irrelevant or unimportant on their own, but they are ingredients of a bigger picture. Sometimes the findings relate to multiple ideas the same time.

The methods used are as follows:

1. **Action Research**
2. **Mini Case Studies**
3. **Participatory Enquiries**







2.4.1

ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is based on the assumption that the social world is in constant change and that both the researcher as well as the research itself are part of it, as Collis & Hussey suggest (2003, 67). The process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting forms a cycle of iteration.

Trend analysis is not only my work but also, to a certain extent, a way of life. I have been involved in the trend field for years before starting this study. It is difficult if not impossible to differentiate free time from the work as a trend analyst, as the looking and scanning for emerging changes or interesting phenomena is a constant process. Walking around with a notebook and writing down notes, thoughts and drawing little scribbles, dates back to my days as a designer. With the cameras of smart phones this scanning has eventually turned to another level, forming a visual diary. One gets ideas everywhere from sitting in a café watching people, to discussions with people and reading the newspaper every day. I have personally witnessed hunches become mainstream trends later on. It is intriguing how one suddenly starts to pay attention or notice phenomena, colours, shapes, materials or behaviour that is a change from what has felt to be relevant before. An old lady walking a dog on the street wearing a funny hat might trigger the process. It is difficult to analyze how much the hunches are based on experience and information, as the futures are continuation of the past and the present.

The intangible and tacit aspects are an inseparable part of trend research and work as a forecaster. With action research, it is possible to go deeper into the world of these elements. Tacit knowledge is related to experience and long process of gathering information. Schön (1983) writes about reflection-in-action and recommends that professionals would keep a diary where they record the process while practicing their work. He assumes (1983,viii) that competent professionals usually know more than they can articulate with words and suggests that while reflection-in-action, a professional turns into a researcher in the practice context. (1983,68)

2.4.2 MINI CASE STUDIES

Mini Case Studies have been conducted in order to get specific insight and depth for the research questions. The German Heimtextil Fair for professionals of the textile industry is known for their ambitious and extensive annual Trend Show and Trend Book. Both have been used as reference for the Mini Case Studies. A small qualitative questionnaire was carried out for the students of Fashion Marketing at Helsinki Design School, a private school offering courses giving tools to the field of Fashion Marketing and Fashion Journalism. The students come from different backgrounds and age groups, but they share a similar interest towards fashion and trends. Answers were written anonymously on a paper. Part of the mini cases were done using participatory observation of the visitors of the Trend Shows in Heimtextil Fair 2012 and 2013.

The mini cases were looking into how certain trends are identified with, when using four ways of articulating and presenting them:

- A.** From words to words, using written singular words only defining a trend.
- B.** From pictures to words, using pictures together with singular words defining 4 different trends.
- C.** From materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition presenting textile trends with strips of textile materials = applying examples from the same field as the trend itself.
- D.** From materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition being a staged world using a wide array of materials, furniture, objects, lights, music and art to create a special ambiance and to portray the trends from many angles = applying examples from different disciplines to the trend in order to enable the comprehension better.

To get insight of the other side of the coin, so to say, of the process and thoughts behind the professionals responsible for the implementation of the Heimtextil trends, a small, informal questionnaire was sent to Anne Marie Commandeur, the director of the Trend Panel in 2013. The approach behind the questionnaires was to get an overall wider view on the subject, not to analyze every detail or percentage relevant to the answers.

Finally, a hypothetical Case Study has been written and presented in order to concretize and give light to the method I propose as part of the answer for the third research question. In that the word "transparency" describing a trend has been studied presenting benchmarks from various fields and analyzing it from the point of view of both a forecaster and a hypothetical client.

2.4.3 PARTICIPATORY ENQUIRIES

As already mentioned, looking systematically for change has been a routine for my work for many years. Therefore it was natural to take a participatory approach for this study. As pointed out in the previous chapter describing the Mini Case Studies and the personal visits to Heimtextil Trend Show, participatory observation was apparent. The work itself has elements from action research as well as participatory enquiries. The working process includes travelling to international design fairs several times a year, and attending seminars. Following daily newspapers, especially articles discussing arts, culture, social and economical issues is part of the work. Following certain innovative web pages, magazines, the work of some designers, documentaries, reading academic books, articles and so on, helps to form a picture of current trends and to form and to analyze the findings of this study.

2.5

RELIABILITY, VALIDITY,
ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Looking at the same research question from different angles, through triangulation, increases the reliability and validity of the study. Long professional experience also adds to this. Professional competence has developed over the years due to systematic approach to learning by doing and researching development.

My own subjective views of the field can be a strength but also a limitation as my opinions are biased. Being too close to the subject sometimes hinders the ability to be objective and prevents from looking at the problem from outside. Sometimes that might be an advantage, though. As mentioned already, tacit and intangible aspects of trend analysis mean there is no solid data available.

3. THE WIDE WORLD OF TRENDS

3.1

INTRODUCTION

Looking into trend related literature has been a substantial part of this study in order to get more theoretical views for a field that is highly fragmented and has many subjective and tacit aspects to it.

The trend discourse seems to take as many angles as there are authors. The literature was deliberately chosen to range from fashion related books and articles, to classical futures research, to practices of looking, as well as futures related material taking the economical angle. Some web articles and web pages were also looked into.

Also scenarios of futurists referring to the changes in the society were included in the study. These were considered as valid given the organizational aspect of this study. The reading process provided a wider understanding of the current aspects of the trend field in general, giving a fair amount of answers but leaving some of the questions unanswered.

The gap in the knowledge the study aimed to fill, appeared to be the contradiction between theoretical methods offered to teach trend spotting and trend analysis and the practice of it. The literature points out that only tiny percentage of the population are visionary trend spotters by nature. The question arises, then, whether trend spotting can be learned at all at least for a professional level.

Furthermore, visuality as a means to illustrate trends is pointed out but in general no specific methods were offered to systematically interpret trends into a more comprehensible form. The offered methods seemed to concern more ways to spot trends but no ways to communicate the findings or interpret them clearer for a client.

Nobody knows what the futures will be like. Instead of one possible future, there can be many. Plural term “futures” is therefore used in the literature as well as in this study instead of the singular form.

Trend analysis is about trying to get insight of what the futures might hold ahead of us. However, the futures will be a continuation of the past and present. With certain methods and skills it is possible to anticipate what changes might occur and what effect they might have in the possible futures. It is common to form scenarios based on multidisciplinary research, at least a utopia, dystopia and business-as-usual.

Naisbitt (2006, 156) says that just a single element of change can form a picture of the futures but a conclusion should never be built on a single signal. One should always look for other signs looking towards the same direction.

3.2

THE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF TRENDS

To get a current understanding of the field one has to start with what is meant as a trend, as it means different things to different people. Vejlggaard (2008, 20) points out that although the word trend is used more by people representing different professions in diverse contexts, there will always be the concept of change included.

After defining that trends are changes in style and taste, Vejlggaard (2008, 161) refines that trends are changes in the following:

- “What we can see and read (for instance, design, art and literature)
- What we can taste (for instance, food and drink)
- What we can smell (for instance, fragrance)
- What we can hear (for instance, music, language)
- What we can feel (for instance, dance and travel)”

Trends are also analyzed in poetic ways. Raymond (2010) says that a desire, mood or an idea can also be a trend. For him trends are a fundamental part of our emotional, physical and psychological landscape. By detecting, mapping and using them to anticipate what is new and next, in the world we live in, we shall understand better the fundamental ideas and principles that drive and motivate us as people. “Forecasters explain to people ‘why’ trends happen, ‘how’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ they happen.” Raymond looks at the field from a trend forecaster’s point of view.

To understand trends and how to research them, Dumitrescu (2011, 23-24) uses a common division of trends into three sizes affected by time. Megatrends that last for a long time, often decades, are in connection with several aspects of the society including economy and politics. Macrotrend lasts around two to five years, it can, however grow into a megatrend if it starts to affect a bigger area and more people. A microtrend only lasts from six months to two years. Dumitrescu uses health as an example. There is a “health-style” megatrend going on; health has shifted from the absence of illness to a form of

self-perception. Consuming organic products is a macrotrend, it can also be called a sub-trend. An iPhone app helping shoppers to find green and healthy products can be called a microtrend.

3.3. WEAK SIGNALS

Weak signals are emerging issues of change. Some of them can turn into trends over a period of time. A weak signal can be described like this: Hiltunen(2009, 6):

1. Makes your colleagues laugh.
2. Your colleagues oppose it: 'No way, it can never happen'.
3. Makes people wonder.
4. No one has heard about it before.
5. It is understood that no one talks about it, it is a taboo.

This study concentrates more on trends in general, not differentiating a trend from a weak signal. Sometimes the distinction between the two is not clear anyhow. If trends are considered difficult to comprehend, weak signals are even harder to grasp, if one is not familiar with them. Growing leather for a leather jacket in a laboratory can be described as weak signal now, in a few years it might have turned into a trend. (Keller, 2012)

Finding several benchmarks in different fields can together be considered to form a trend in some fields, although the same issue or phenomenon from another field might be just a weak signal.

3.4 THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE TRENDS, TRENDSETTERS, FORECASTERS AND INNOVATORS

Behind trends there are always people. People adopting trends are often divided into innovators or trend spotters, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards and non-adaptors. The names of these groups vary slightly according to various authors. In this study we concentrate on the innovators and the early adopters. Vejlgaard places trend creators on the top of his Diamond-Shaped Trend Model. Raymond places innovators on top of his list.

Vejlgaard suggests that innovators and trend creators are not the same. While innovators do not actually come up with new ideas or create new knowledge, they are the first to adopt what other people already have invented (Vejlgaard, 2008,165). According to him trend creators are the people who, as their name suggests, create new trends (ibid).

Raymond (2010) points out, citing Rogers' theory 'Diffusion of Innovations', that the innovators are individuals responsible for the development of an innovation or the introduction of a new idea. They might not be the ones responsible for the original idea, but they have the ability to articulate a trend in a way that makes sense to others. Vejlgaard's and Raymond's confusing notions show, in my opinion, how fragmented and blurry the trend field is. Raymond is not denying that innovators could not be responsible for the original idea. In other contexts, innovators are usually referred to the same way as Raymond says above, individuals developing an innovation. For me that means creating something totally new.

The next group in the diffusion theory are the early adopters. They are usually close friends or colleagues of the innovator and they represent about 13,5 % of a social group. They are willing to be exposed and to try new ideas as long as the example comes from a trusted and respected individual or group of a certain community or a social group they as well feel to be a part of. Anyhow, Lynch & Strauss (2007,131) cite Rogers that they are “the individuals to check with”.

Vejlgaard has an approach linked in relation with fashion. He (2008, 71) describes that trendsetters are the most open and curious individuals in regards to style and taste. For them, feeling change is a positive thing when it takes place at regular intervals. Trend-setters are enthusiastic about innovative new styles and they are the very first to adopt them. They also dare to adopt an innovative style before it has been seen on others. Based on Vejlgaard ´s (2008, 75,) Diamond-Shaped Trend Model, there are 5 % trendsetters in the general population. The next group downwards is the trend followers, around 10% in the general population. Vejlgaard (2008,71) defines this group in the following way: followers are similar to trendsetters and get the inspiration from them, but they are not as daring. They do not deploy new and innovative styles before someone else has already done so. They are open to change in styles and/or taste, but they need the acceptance from others before applying them.

Lynch & Strauss (2007,131-132) write citing Rogers further that behind the early adopters there are the early majority, with a large 34 % of the population. They show initial caution but they do not resist innovation. Late majority is also a considerable group of 34%, they adopt innovations because they feel they have to due to the pressure from the peer and marketplace. Laggards represent 16% of the population and they are suspicious and doubting and therefore come last in adopting new innovations. Non-adopters are outside statistical analysis; they will not adopt innovations, the reason being social, economical or psychological.

The diffusion process is often articulated as a trickle-down process, however there is also criticism against it. Lynch & Strauss (2007, 62) cite Field suggesting that trends can also trickle upwards from lower to higher status as has happened with subcultures. African-American music, dance, dress and speech are used as an example. Trends can also trickle across, as Nuutinen (2004,75) writes citing Brannon that in any socioeconomic class a trend can become popular and start to spread within the class.

3.5

TRENDS AS VISUAL CULTURE

As discussed in the previous chapter, people adopt trends and innovations with different rates. One might assume there is also a link with seeing, how a person can spot new trends or not. Lynch & Strauss (2007,130) cite Rogers suggesting that there is a cumulative increase in how innovations are adopted. When knowledge about an innovation spreads and more people adopt it, the level of communication also increases until it reaches the maximum impact and starts to fade. One aspect relating to the difficulty of comprehending trends is related to seeing.

Hiltunen (2010,37) cites Sardar arguing that people see what they want to see. ”Seeing only what one wants to see, of course, is a burden in regard to looking at the changes in the future.” Visual culture takes another approach to seeing. Sturken and Cartwright (2001, 26) write that we are trained to read images in a certain way, through cultural codes with aspects of gendered, racial as well as class-specific meanings. We are often not even aware of the process of noticing social, cultural and historical meanings of images. (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 31). They continue (2003, 328) that the context in which a viewer experiences an image, partly affects how he or she makes meanings to the image.

Trends are also related to personal tastes. As Vejlggaard (2008, 71) already mentioned above, the trendsetters are the most open and curious individuals in relation to taste. Taste affects especially fashion related trends and what sort of trends one follows. Subcultures have deliberately played with the boundaries of good taste, opting for kitsch and other representations considered as bad taste. Sturken and Cartwright (2001, 65) write that the concept of taste is part of a tacit value system and reflects the tastes of the middle and upper classes. Nuutinen (2004, 63) suggests that taste is a critical opinion affecting how one makes choices. She continues, citing Perna, that taste is in constant change, it is dynamic. She states finally, citing Anspach, that as taste is difficult to judge, being based on aesthetic grounds, it is referred to in relation to time and culture. It is the context that defines what is considered as good taste.

Based on my experiences of the fashion, interior design and design world, what is considered as good taste has shifted towards a wider range of acceptance. As an example, it is common to mix kitsch objects with high-class design at home. One could assume that same applies to fashion related taste issues. Nowadays, it may be more acceptable to disagree what is considered to be good taste (or fashionable for that matter). Taste is definitely bound to cultural aspects, as Nuutinen (2004, 63) mentions citing Roach & Eicher. Taste is a measure of how someone has a capability of living according to the standards of a community (ibid).

As we can see taste in general is an intriguing subject for further research.

3.6

CAN ONE BECOME A TRENDSETTER?

It is style that changes not the individual in the Diamond-Shaped Trend Model. That is because we have a stable core - our personality. Vejlggaard (2008,76-77) comes to that conclusion based on several studies in which scientists observed the same groups of people for several decades. He writes that most psychologists will conclude that although the personality of people does change with time, it does not change much. The exception can occur if something dramatic takes place, an illness, accident, death of a close family member, for example. He also points out an interesting fact that being a trendsetter does not mean one is governed only by his or her personality as a trendsetter. Also the financial situation, needs and interests, time constraints and values somewhat affect our personalities. He adds that while it is rare to change personality after a certain age, a person can change values. Values have a solid connection to consumer behavior.

Raymond (2010, 12) compares trend forecasters to lifestyle detectives: "They are people who spend their time detecting patterns or shifts in attitudes, mindsets of lifestyle options, that run against the current thinking or how people normally behave, live, dress, act communicate and trade." Therefore it is natural that trend research companies frequently use trend scouts, people all over the world looking for interesting new ideas, start-ups, phenomena and weak signals and report them to their employers. The company then often uses their professional staff to cluster the ideas. After that the data is analyzed sometimes with specialists of certain fields. Often this analyzing takes place in ideation or future workshops. Dumitrescu (2011,108) points out that like many others, trends do not exist in isolation, they are always a part of a bigger context. They cannot be fully trusted either, as they are only trajectories of the future.

3.7

TRENDS OF VALUES AND
THE BIGGER PICTURE

There seems to be a shift in society towards softer values. Magazines are filled with articles of down-shifting. Young people appear to value happiness more than money earned with long hours of work. It is also already quite common to take consumers along in all kinds of organizational processes, for instance design processes. People are getting more and more used to being able to customize or personalize products or services they are purchasing. For some that could become a some sort of norm. Aaltonen & Jensen (2012, 73) refer to the society moving towards post-materialist consumption. When people reach the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there will be a post materialist level. Emotional consumption is where people thrive towards a better balance between work and family.

These people donate to welfare and they shun luxury as it feels materialistic. These changes are challenges that organizations should take into account in their strategies.

Aaltonen & Jensen (2012, 263) write about the values of the future and dreams that are personal and private. They are suggesting several examples where the shifts will take place. Hierarchies are going to diminish in organizations. Individuality will increase and people can and will pursue their dreams. Feminine values are getting more common and people value relationships more than wealth. There will be more tolerance towards incompleteness and insecurity. It will be more accepted to fulfill one's own needs and thus to abandon inhibitions.

They (2012, 264) continue with 5 Future theses for the West:

Emotionalization.

As people are more post-materialist, it makes sense to appeal to the hearts. The products people buy need to be alluring as people do not spend for the sake of spending anymore. Companies should be value led, as money is not the primary motivation for the employees any longer. They want to be motivated at work.

Personalization.

Both customers as well as employees take it for granted that they are treated as individuals. The brand has to be personal; it has to tell a story about the person as an individual. The customers want to participate and to be included more and more. Co-creating is essential.

Decentralizing.

Brands are getting smaller and organizations bigger. This is going to change as customers want more responsibility. This is possible within smaller companies.

Innovation.

It is the hype word, but the challenges are enormous: how to deal with feelings and emotions. Online shops are another challenge. New innovative thinking has to be encouraged, it will happen outside the mainstream.

Femininity.

Feminine values are increasing and arriving to the work places. Good team players are the winners. Although individualism will still be important, sociality will grow within communities.

3.8

VISUALITY AND VISUALIZATION

Visuality is used in many new ways especially in the forecasting and design world.

A lot of ideas are mapped together and a visual mood board is often compiled in order to help finding a pattern and making a certain mood easier to comprehend. However that is not the case always. Hiltunen (2010, 91) summarizes that "In organizations and in the field of strategic foresight, methods that are based on images are scarce." She cites Näsänen and Biederman and points out the necessity of using visual images, as they are fast and easier to process compared to text. An information overload is part of everyday lives whether we want it or not. Visualization helps to process data and the role of it is increasing. Information graphics can help to crystallize information and make it easier to draw conclusions in order to make sense of the overflowing world of information. Design processes as well as forecasters have always used visual images as a tool.

The visual culture is taking over the world. Naisbitt (2006, 117) points out that the history of civilization is a history of communication. A new language has to be learned if that communication shifts from the word to the visual. He thinks the solution will be education in technology and the arts; "A technology-driven brain and a lyrical heart. We need the computers and the poets."

Naisbitt (2006,118) names eight forces pushing in the direction of the visually dominant world:

1. The slow death of the newspaper culture
2. Advertising - back to "a picture is worth a thousand of words"
3. Upscale design for common goods
4. Architecture as visual art
5. Fashion, architecture and art
6. Music, video and film
7. The changing role of photography
8. The democratization of the American art museum"

Naisbitt (2006,154) refers to data visualization as being an effective way to manage information; the use of colours is an important part data visualization process. That is visible in David McCandless' web pages and his book *Information is Beautiful* (2009). A good visualization of data saves time and might help to see a change of pattern somewhere. With these ideas Naisbitt has been ahead of his time. Newspapers like Helsingin Sanomat have started to present data and research results with information graphics only recently .

Naisbitt (2006,155) reminds, however, that even when many things are changing, most things remain the same. No matter what happens, there will always be words and images. In many cases, however, the written will be replaced by visual representation and literary narrative will be displaced by illustration.

Hassi & Laakso (2011, 56) describe visualizing in context with Design Thinking. For them visualizing is in close relation with prototyping. Visualization means expressing oneself in media other than words and symbols. It is seen as the dominant sense making mode of Design Thinking.

3.9

DESIGN THINKING AND
SIMILARITIES WITH TRENDS

Design Thinking is a current and popular topic for research with many challenges. It is as vague a concept as trends in general and has some similarities. (Hassi & Laakso, 2011, 58) describe that the discipline of Design Thinking is future-oriented. A common characteristic of it is the ability to anticipate and visualize new scenarios. Design being a means to improve an existing situation into a more preferred one, meaning that designers are constantly dealing with change.

Utilizing trends goes well with the process of Design Thinking since looking into ideas and trends is the starting point in most designers work. The challenges they face are the same. For instance a lot of trust is required from the management when dealing with designers and trend analysts. I have experiences where designers' ideas of a new (and commercial) concept are refused as not being commercial enough, the argument being that no one else seems to be doing similar things, therefore it cannot be commercial. Then six months later at a fashion fair in Paris, the same director turns around looking at the competitor's collection and asks "Why don't we have this sort of a concept?"

3.10

METHODS OF TREND RESEARCH

Trend analysis is about trying to get insight of what the futures might hold ahead of us. With certain methods and skills it is possible to assume what changes might occur and what effect they might have in the possible futures. But there is always a link with the past. When I took my first futures research class, the lecturer asked us to think of the future after 200 years. That felt impossible. He then asked us to think back 200 years and explained that many things were the same as now: people had families, they worked, there was travelling, music, love, hate and arguments, just as there are now.

There are many categories of trend research for different purposes and therefore also a vast selection of different methods to gain data to be used as a base on the assumptions of future trends. On top of standard qualitative and quantitative surveys and interviews, there are several methods used in classical futures research which are also common in trend research. To complicate matters sometimes there is no distinction between trend research and futures research.

Mixing methods is also common for all the futures studies but the variety of methods futurists use vary a great deal. Bell (2003, 241) writes that methods as such do not guarantee good or bad work. It depends on the skills, talent and ingenuity of the futures researcher as well as pure luck. According to Bell experienced forecasters have learned that both scientific explanation and reliable prediction are best served when several methods are used on the same problem. I feel this is the core of the trend analysis and that it is currently not emphasized enough.

3.10.1 FUTURE ILLUSTRATION

Continuing with the issue of visibility, there is a variety of research conducted with the help of visualization. Visualization, mood boards, maps and pictures are used to back up information and on their own. Dumitrescu (2011, 114) cites Müller explaining that visualizations are often duplicates of verbalized content and used, often in workshops, only as a back up for written material. In that case they do not supply new information. But when they are used as an instrument for imagining ideas and stimulating the thought process, they can have almost a mediating role. He continues to state that visualizations are at their best if they follow a set of criteria: “Content (what?), context (where, how?), recipient (who?) and function (why?).”

Dumitrescu (2011, 110) points out that imagining something that does not yet exist can be very difficult. Future illustration refers to visual elements, which might help the issue.

3.10.2 SCENARIOS

As mentioned before, it is impossible to actually predict the futures, therefore both general futures research and all kinds of trend research uses scenarios to help people to perceive various threats and possibilities. Selecting at least three different possible scenarios based on multidisciplinary data can help organizations to make futures oriented decisions.

Illustrating the results as scenarios is the most common methodological tool of futurists. Bell (2003, 317) suggests that a scenario is really a story of the future, with elements of the past and the present. It creates alternative possibilities for the futures, including goals and values. The futures are valued according to desirability or undesirability, describing choices what people can make and what actions should be made. Examples of typical scenarios include utopia, dystopia and business-as-usual. The scenarios allow people to think about the possible futures and explore different reactions to them. It might help organizations to prepare for possible unexpected events.

3.10.3

DELPHI METHOD

Delphi is a classic futures research method where a group of experts are interviewed. Dumitrescu (2011, 189) points out that experts are interviewed anonymously. The participants do not know who the others are. The answers of the whole group involved are then shown to the participants. They give feedback in turn and the discussion continues. This can contain several rounds. According to Bell (2003, 262) the procedure has at least 8 steps.

First a topic is chosen. The idea is to investigate possible, probable and preferable futures. Second step is to form a questionnaire. Choosing the participants, usually experts whose opinions are to be studied is the third step. The fourth step is the questionnaire, where the initial opinions are measured. The preliminary summary of the data takes place fifth. The sixth step is to communicate the results and give feedback to the interviewees. The gained knowledge of the results and others' opinions might affect the opinions of the experts, so there is a remeasurement of the opinions as the seventh step. Finally there will be an analysis, interpretation and presentation of the data which usually results into writing a final report.

3.10.4

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Trend analysis is often based on the changes happening in the society, the shifts of consumer behaviour and values.

The society is about people. There is an ongoing and visible shift in making research processes more human centered. Service Design and Design Thinking are a part of this shift towards customer oriented practices and businesses. According to Dumitrescu (2011, 86) Consumer Insights are unrevealed emotions. Finding them means: "Grasping the inner nature of things intuitively, having a clear and deep perception of the situation and understanding a sudden and complex situation."

Analyzing trends and insights certain questions have to be asked always. Dumitrescu (2011, 92) sees that Consumer Insights are a mixture of gut feelings and strategy. She cites Baumann, the CEO and Founder of Sturm und Drang, a qualitative research company. To assess insight potential three questions are always asked:

- “1. Does it start with a true and interesting phenomena observation?
2. Does it incorporate an underlying motivator (fear, desire) and a tension that is caused by an apparent contradiction?
3. Does it trigger action?”

3.10.5 MONITORING

Bell (2003, 290) suggests that assessing events in process as soon as they occur is called Monitoring. Both Dumitrescu (2011) and Bell, (2003) mention Naisbitt's book Megatrends (1982). Naisbitt's organization monitored 6000 local newspapers each month in the U.S.A and aimed to pinpoint, trace and evaluate important issues and trends. Bell criticizes Naisbitt by pointing out how many of the megatrends he predicted have not become true. Dumitrescu and the people she interviews take a more gentle view. Anyway, the issue shows how difficult it is to predict future.

Futures research has sometimes a more critical approach. In trend research, however, Monitoring or observing many different ways can show shifts in values, consumption and changes taking place in the society. Monitoring often includes scanning, detecting, projecting or forecasting, evaluating, reacting and tracking. All valuable parts of trend research. Monitoring newspapers on a daily base is a good way of getting overall data of broad areas of topics.

3.10.6 FUTURE WORKSHOPS

Future Workshops are also a common proactive method. People are increasingly involved in all kinds of processes by organizations and communities. Bell (2003, 301) explains Future Workshops aiming to invent new social institutions. People are encouraged to be involved in decision making and to create their own images of the desired future. Usually the gathering is quite informal. The process starts with selecting a topic and involving 20-25 participants. A facilitator is needed to ask questions and to move the workshop along. It usually consists of three phases: a critique phase where the faults are mapped out, a fantasy phase and an implementation phase. The tone of discussion is switched from negative to positive. What future would you like if you could have any future? For the implementation the facilitator sums up the gained information and asks the participants to face the facts, but in a positive way. Consulting experts and tracking down facts becomes part of this. Participants then start putting the recommendations into action with a plan. Future workshops enhance the feeling of being more efficient, more informed and belonging as a part of the community. People feel it makes a difference to participate together in order to improve matters concerning their life.

Variations of this method have become very popular over the years. Co-creating together with clients and end-users to gain knowledge and to improve products is widely used as a tool to improve services, businesses and strategies. Future Workshops are also used as a design tool.

3.10.7 GAMING

Gaming as a method is already introduced by Bell (2003, 283) with references to Shubik's Game Theory (1982:3). Guetzkow et al. (1963) used it especially with war strategies. Typically a Gaming involves a model of some situation or context in which some aspects of reality are simulated. Human beings play roles in which they make decisions and take actions that affect the outcome of the game played. But unlike reality one always has the option to leave the game. Bell points out six purposes of Gaming by Shubik and adds two more himself: Teaching, training, operational gaming, experimentation or research, entertainment, therapy, diagnosis and finally forecasting. Obviously the results of the gaming can at best be just one abstraction of only part of reality. As the games depend on the people who construct them and the people who play they should be linked with other methods. Differences in skills, judgment, beliefs and values affect the results.

It is not a surprise, that with the technology advancing over the years Computer Gaming has become extremely popular and widely used in trend research. Dumitrescu (2011, 192) quotes the Director of Games Research of IFTF Jane McGonigals TED.talk referring to games like Warcraft giving players the means to save the world and to learn to become a hero. She toys with the thought of harnessing game power to solve problems in real life.

Naisbitt (2006, 141) suggests that tomorrow's storytellers anticipate the future, watching the score of the game. He also refers to a New York Times article reporting that museum exhibitions, academic conferences, and university curriculums have examined games as art. (Leland 4.12.2005)

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE TREND FIELD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study the research questions have been looked into from many angles. It has been a long process, starting many years before this actual study was even planned. Parts of the findings are results from observing the trend field for several years and having discussions with business management in organizations, trend professionals, students and people generally interested in trends.

Systemic monitoring of trends, people, emerging issues and shifts of values, consumer behaviour, general national as well as international news and the phenomena of the society have been a part of my every day and work life for years. Therefore they cannot be separated from the process. The research questions have been intriguing for me for a long time. Why something so easy for some people can be so difficult for someone else, and could that be made easier?

The literature review brought forth some interesting results of how heterogeneous, complex and difficult to comprehend the discourse of trends seems to be. It makes no difference whether trend analysis is looked at from the business and professional point of view or from the point of view of an observer or a client buying trend services.

As a journalist I have visited the Heimtextil Trend Show for about seven years. Heimtextil is one of the biggest textile fairs in the world, taking place once a year in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. There were about 70,000 trade visitors from 132 countries and 2,634 exhibitors from 61 countries during 11-14 January, 2013.

Compared to most other trade fairs in the field of textiles, fashion and interiors, the Trend Show at Heimtextil is extensive. A Trend Table consisting of international design agencies and trend agencies from six countries is behind the trends of Heimtextil. The idea is that international trend professionals bring in their own visions of change and together they create a commercial, extensive conclusion of the textile trends for the following year. The trends are aimed at the textile professionals, exhibitors and visitors of the fair.

The annual Trend Show is staged in a separate hall where futures trends are divided into four themes. The themes are exhibited almost the same way as sets are created for a play in a theater. A Trend Book is also produced to illustrate the four trend themes. In the book, each trend theme is presented with texts, pictures and colour charts. Each of the four themes is described with key terms, which are individual words.

The production implementation of the Trend Show and the Trend Book rotates. One of the contributing agencies takes the responsibility to realize the Trend Show each year. The result can be quite different depending on the agency responsible. Both the Trend Shows and the Trend book have been used as a reference for this study. In addition the observations of visits to Heimtextil fair for many years, especially the years 2012 and 2013 have been used as research material.

To get more information on the background of the Heimtextil Trend Show, a questionnaire was sent to Anne Marie Commandeur, the director of Stijlinstituut Amsterdam and a member of the Trend Table. She was responsible for the Trend Show of 2013-2014.

I conducted a small-scale questionnaire to students of Fashion Marketing, a private course in Helsinki. The aim was to learn how about 20 students, not professionals in trend industry but people with an interest to fashion and trends, felt about trends being difficult to understand or did they feel that way.

The second objective was to study how the conception of trends changes or does it change, when a trend is represented with different means. There were four different methods used:

- A. From words to words, using written singular words only defining a trend.
- B. From pictures to words, using pictures together with singular words defining four different trends.
- C. From materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition presenting textile trends with strips of textile materials = applying examples from the same field as the trend itself.
- D. From materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition being a staged world using a wide array of materials, furniture, objects, lights, music and art to create a special ambiance and to portray the trends from many angles = applying examples from different disciplines to the trend in order to enable the comprehension better.

The students were asked three questions:

- 1. What is most difficult in understanding trends?
- 2. Describe the word "transparency" as a trend in as wide context as possible?
- 3. Look at the pictures of the Heimtextil Trend Book illustrating the four different trend themes. In addition there is a list of key terms (words) describing each theme. Choose 3 key words best describing each trend theme.

In addition to the questionnaires and observations to gain insight for the A, B, C and D in order to represent a certain trend as clearly as possible, I also compiled a hypothetical case-study explaining how I work with trends. The subject was transparency as I find it a significant trend of the futures.

The shallow connotation of the word trend has also been looked into.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

4.2.1 BACKGROUND OF THE INTERVIEWEES AND THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Helsinki Design School is a new private school offering part time courses giving tools and information to the various fashion related areas i.e. Fashion Marketing, Fashion Journalism, Fashion Design. There is also a course for Visualists/ Stylists.

The students of Fashion Marketing course took part in the questionnaire 8.2.2013, at the first day of the course. There are 30 students, 29 women and one man. Two students were absent, including the only man, the day the questionnaire took place. Not all students answered every question. Their age varies from 18-46, most of them (20) are in their early twenties. One is 36, one 39 and one 46 years of age. The students come from many working backgrounds: the youngest have just finished high school, some work as sales staff mostly in fashion stores, some have a background already in marketing, someone works in

a bank etc. The group is an interesting, heterogeneous selection of women for this questionnaire as their ages and backgrounds vary, but they share a similar interest towards fashion and trends.

The questionnaire was very basic and conducted anonymously. In the first part, the questions were projected and the students were asked to answer the questions in writing very briefly with a couple of sentences. The first two questions were asked without a reference or any specific context. For the third question, three copies of Heimtextil Trend Book 2013/2014 were passed around to be looked at and referred to.

The aim was to gather overall insight into the research questions of this study and to get an overall wider view on the subject. The idea was to find out how differently or unani-mously people, who are interested in trends but are not designers, feel about trends and how some words relate trends in their mind. The idea was not to go into a deep analysis comparing backgrounds, education, the town they live in or ages with the results. (Not all of the original interview questions or answers were used or analyzed for this study, as they were not relevant in the end).

4.2.2 THE FIRST QUESTION: WHAT IS MOST DIFFICULT IN UNDERSTANDING TRENDS?

20 students answered the first question. The aim of this question was to shed light on the assumption that trends in general are blurry, vague and difficult to comprehend. This became clear also from the literature review. Here the idea was to hear how people who are not professionals but yet are interested in trends feel about them. The results were as expected. Only one person out of 20 considered trends easy to understand.

The students told that the logic behind trends in general seems difficult to understand. It is a mystery how a trend is born, what becomes a trend and why they change so fast. Or why some of them stay for years and some not. Someone mentioned it is difficult to see beauty in something that was considered ugly before. A student was puzzled how opposites like pastel colours and neon colours can be trends the same time. Somebody else was wondering who decides the trends.

The answers reinforced the assumption that trends indeed can be difficult to understand, even when one is interested in them and follows them on some level. New trends are presented in the media every season, but the actual process of how trends are born, how they spread in a society or why they change so quickly is rarely covered.

4.2.3

THE SECOND QUESTION: DESCRIBE THE WORD "TRANSPARENCY" AS A TREND IN AS WIDE CONTEXT AS POSSIBLE.

The word "transparency" was chosen as a question for the questionnaire for two reasons. First reason was to see what images a single word can bring to one's mind. Trends are frequently illustrated with so called "trend language", they are single words, often adjectives. The objective was to study how the conception of trends changes or does it, when a trend is represented with different means. Here method A was used, illustrating a trend from words to words, using written singular words only defining a trend.

Secondly, the particular word "transparency" was used because there are several contexts it can refer to. I also see transparency as an important trend of the futures. (There will be a hypothetical case study following with it.)

The subject was not specifically opened, other than encouraging the interviewees to think about "transparency" as a trend as widely as possible. 18 students answered this question. Some people answered the question in two parts, one relating to fashion and one part relating to other fields. The range of answers showed the diversity of images one has of a trend when there are only words, no context or anything to back up the original meaning. The poetic words meant different things for everyone.

Some students linked transparency with literal transparent fashion items, garments and material. Eight answers were related to concrete fashion fabrics being see-through. 6 students referred to clothes as being transparent. The fact they are students of Fashion Marketing and therefore share an interest to fashion, might have something to do with that. Most students (14) referred to fashion and textile words. It would have been interesting to ask people to refine the word "transparent" without the context to trends in general, as many people link the word trend with fashion in any case.

Nine answers were related to corporate or manufacturing processes, awareness of a company or products. One student explained later having immediately thought about corporate environment, as she works in marketing outside the fashion industry. The answers indicate (although the questionnaire is very limited) that if a trend is represented with words only, one's own field of work, interests and probably emotions as well have an influence on how a trend is understood. From the trend professional's point of view trying to present certain trends, this information is crucial as well.

4.2.4

THE THIRD QUESTION: CHOOSE THREE KEYWORDS BEST DESCRIBING EACH OF THE FOUR TREND THEMES.

Three Heimtextil Trend Books were passed around for the students to refer to. They were asked to look at the pictures illustrating the four different trend themes. In addition there is a list of key terms (words) describing each theme. They were asked to choose three key words best describing each trend theme. 24 students took part in this questionnaire, one was rejected as her chosen words did not match the given words the question related to. Parts of the book can be read online.

The four themes in the Trend Book are listed below:

Each theme has around 30 key words illustrating the theme. Some of them are adjectives like organic, surreal and smart. Some of them are nouns like storytelling, richness etc.

The Historian, presented with 29 key words

The Eccentric, presented with 28 key words

The Inventor, presented with 29 key words

The Geologist, presented with 30 key words

= Altogether 116 words to choose from.

Students had to pick three words from each of the four themes, which makes 12 words altogether. So 23 people had to choose 12 words which would have resulted in 276 words altogether, but as one person had accidentally only chosen two words for one theme, there are 275 words chosen.

The aim was to see how unanimous people were choosing the words. There seemed to be a variety of answers, with not much logic behind them.

The results were:

Out of 116 words 46 words were not chosen at all

Out of 116 words 14 words were chosen once

Out of 116 words 13 words were chosen twice

Out of 116 words four words were chosen three times

Out of 116 words eight words were chosen four times

Out of 116 words six words were chosen five times

Out of 116 words one word was chosen six times

Out of 116 words five words were chosen seven times

Out of 116 words four words were chosen eight times

Out of 116 words one word was chosen nine times

Out of 116 words two words were chosen 10 times

Out of 116 words two words were chosen 11 times

Out of 116 words two words were chosen 12 times

Out of 116 words one word was chosen 13 times

Three most popular words in each group were chosen like this:

Historian:

Storytelling, chosen by 12 people

= 52%

Richness, chosen by 12 people

= 52%

Detailed, chosen by 11 people

= 48%

Eccentric:

Unique, chosen by 10 people

= 44%

Decorative, chosen by eight people

= 35%

Arts & Crafts, chosen by seven people

= 30%

Inventor:

Fun, chosen by 11 people

= 48%

Smart, chosen by nine people

= 39%

Challenging, chosen by eight people

= 35%

Geologist:

Organic, chosen by 13 people

= 57%

Geological, chosen by 10 people

= 44%

Surreal, chosen by eight people

= 35%

Using visual images from a Trend Book, together with the “trend language” did not seem to be much more efficient. The students were asked to choose three words best describing each theme of four different trends. The dispersion was prominent. As a curiosity, there were many words chosen only once, as 61,1% of the interviewees had chosen a word nobody else considered describing a trend the best. There was no agreement in which of the words was among the most important representing the trend for them. Even the most popular word, ‘Organic’ was chosen only by 57% of the participants.

As mentioned before the idea for the questionnaire was to gain more knowledge on how differently people understand trends and how much that might change when different methods are used to back up the presentation of certain trends. Here the students had a chance to link pictures from the Trend Book with the words. Method B was used to illustrate a trend: from pictures to words, using pictures together with singular words defining four different trends.

There are obviously different reasons why the students chose the words best describing the four trend themes. As the Trend Book and the words were in English, the interviewees’ varying skills of English might have affected the choices, so that words they do not know might have been avoided. This study does not go into that detail.

The basic idea was to ask the students to choose the words more as a “gut” feeling relating to the texts and pictures of the Trend Book and to observe from there how unanimous the answers are. Another interesting subject for a further study would be to actually research the emotions certain trend relating words and images separately and together will evoke. But the main point, as mentioned before, was to see the variety of answers using vague “trend language” often used especially when relating to the fashion and design world.

The percentages are unimportant with this questionnaire, as the main finding is about how trends are related to what people see and feel. The results reinforced my assumption that words mean different things to everyone, as do trends. There are subjective cultural, context and gender bound reasons behind decoding images as Sturken & Cartwright (2005) point out. Probably age related issues also affect how one perceives trends. Vejlggaard (2008) writes about the personality of a trend spotter as a person who does not change much. I see personality the same way. Personal tastes reflect how a trend is understood especially if it presented in a vague way. Using visual pictures of the subject helps and is better than using just words, as in method A.

Being Trend Book, Heimtextil Trends 2013/2014 by Stijlinstituut Amsterdam (8-11)
The pictures of the four trends and the texts the students were referring to were the following:



The historian

(Page 13–27)

A treasurer of the past, seeking value and discovering ways to make history relevant to contemporary life. Partial to noble products of supreme craft and artisan-ship with aristocratic élan.

key terms: craftsmanship, enchantment, story-telling, richness, embellishment, opulent, ornate, detailed, quilted, embroidered, metallic, gold, armour, embossed, ornaments, lace, openwork, filigree, silk sheen, jacquard, pearlescent, futuristic crafts, laser cut, carved, oriental flavour

Ein Hüter der Vergangenheit. Er schätzt dauerhafte Werte und entdeckt neue Wege, Vergangenes ins Hier und Jetzt zu bringen. Er liebt edle Produkte höchster Handwerkskunst mit aristokratischer Dynamik.

Schlagwörter: Handwerkskunst, Verzauberung, Storytelling, Reichtum, Verschönerung, opulent, prunkvoll, detailliert, wattiert, bestickt, metallisch, Gold, Rüstung, gestanzt, Ornamente, Spitze, Openwork, filigran, Seidenglanz, Jacquard, Perleffekte, futuristische Handwerkskunst, Laser-Cuts, geschnitzt, orientalische Prägung



The eccentric

(Page 29–43)

A hunter and collector, chasing the exquisite and the unique, cherishing and mixing discoveries with daring eclecticism. Assembles flamboyant concepts that have a timeless quality and an extremely decorative character.

key terms: flamboyance, passion, decorative, arts & crafts, curiosities, unique, origin, folkloric, exotic, tribal, poetic, eclectic, timeless, light-hearted, humour, suiting-inspired, herringbones, flowers, chintz, oriental, patterns, accessories, patina, trims, floating yarns, feathers, gobelin

Ein Jäger und Sammler, auf der Suche nach dem Außergewöhnlichen und Einzigartigen. Seine Entdeckungen kombiniert er mutig und selbstbewusst. Er stellt extravagante Konzepte von zeitloser Qualität und dekorativem Charakter zusammen.

Schlagwörter: Extravaganz, Leidenschaft, dekorativ, Kunst und Handwerk, Kuriositäten, Herkunft, folkloristisch, exotisch, ethnisch, poetisch, ungewöhnlich, zeitlos, Eleganz, unbeschwert, vom Anzugsstoff inspiriert, Fischgrätmuster, Blumen, Chintz, orientalisch, Muster, Accessoires, Patina, Zierbänder, freischwebende Garne, Federn, Gobelin



The inventor

(Page 45–59)

An intelligent free thinker, experimenting and researching solutions to make life fulfilling, fun and exciting. Fond of concepts in which function meets fun, wellness and entertainment. Eager to leave a personal trace on designs.

key terms: challenging, performing, smart, wellness, entertainment, sensorial, kinetic, interactive, fun, play, experiential, decorative, dimensional, tactile, openwork, grids, bonded, welded, comfort, soft, foamy, moulded, padded, technical, iridescent, featherweight, illuminative

Ein intelligenter, wacher Geist, der leidenschaftlich gerne experimentiert. Er sucht und findet Dinge, die das Leben spannend machen, es bereichern oder einfach nur Spaß machen. Er entwickelt Konzepte, die Funktion und Spaß sowie Wellness und Genuss miteinander verbinden. Er ist bestrebt, dem Design seinen eigenen Stempel aufzudrücken.

Schlagwörter: Herausfordernd, gestaltend, clever, Wellness, Entertainment, sensorisch, kinetisch, interaktiv, Spaß, Spiel, zum Ausprobieren, dekorativ, dimensional, taktil, Openwork, Gitter, gebondet, verschweißt, Komfort, weich, geschäumt, geformt, wattiert, voluminös, technisch, irisierend, federleicht, leuchtend



The geologist

(Page 61–75)

A nature lover, preserving as well as exploring the deepest layers of the earth and digging down for the unseen and the unexpected. Values the precious imperfections of geological textures, the science of nature and its surreal quality.

key terms: explore, imperfections, geological, organic, erosion, oxidation, science, surreal, distorted, gradient, venomous, marled, viral, iridescence, metallic, crystals, reflections, plissés, jacquard, leather, paper, bark, mineral, ores, copper, raw, rustic, traces, granulated, crackled

Der Naturliebhaber schätzt und schützt die Erde mit all ihren Kostbarkeiten. Er erforscht sie bis in die tiefsten Schichten und begibt sich auf Entdeckungsreise nach dem Unbekannten und Unerwarteten. Er schätzt das Wertvolle an den Unregelmäßigkeiten geologischer Maserungen, die Lehre von der Natur und ihren surrealen Eigenschaften.

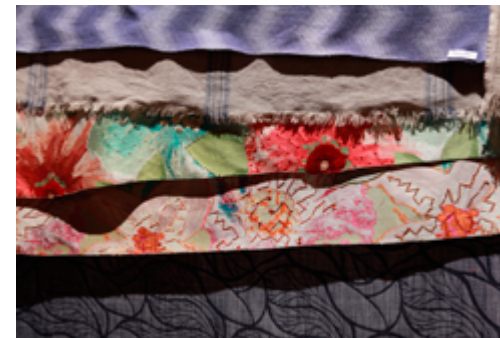
Schlagwörter: Erforschen, Unregelmäßigkeiten, geologisch, organisch, Erosion, Oxidation, Wissenschaft, surreal, verzerrt, Farbabstufungen, giftig, Mergelaspekte, viral, Schillern, metallisch, Kristalle, Spiegelungen, wachsend, Plisse, Jacquard, Leder, Papier, Rinde, Mineralien, Erze, Kupfer, grob, rustikal, Spuren, körnig, gesprungen

4.2.5 THE VISIT TO HEIMTEXTIL TREND SHOW 2012

As mentioned above, the Trend Show at Heimtextil in Frankfurt is always very big and ambitious. The Trend Table behind the trends of Heimtextil consists of international design agencies from six countries. The leadership is rotated annually. One contributing agency takes the responsibility to realize the Trend Show each year. The forthcoming trends are usually divided into four separate themes each year. Last year the exhibition was compiled building four areas, one for each trend theme. Each area consisted mainly of strips of different kinds of textile fabrics suitable to illustrate each theme. A guided tour is usually arranged for the journalists where each trend is discussed. Several times there has been criticism from international (textile and interior) trade journalists, as well as representatives of personnel of organizations visiting or exhibiting at the fair. People complain that they do not really understand the diverse trends or the differences between them. Last year it was the same; people attending the press tour complained they did not get the message amongst the materials. For me that was not the case.

Being personally present, being able to see and feel the exhibition, to see "live" all the colours and textures divided into groups and to have a tactile connection with the materials, made it easy to understand the differences between the trend themes. As a designer and especially as a fashion editor I have been to Paris, Milan and London many times attending international Ready-to-Wear Fashion Shows. Seeing the shows personally, seeing the set, listening to the music and personally experiencing all the elements of the "play" reinforcing the mood and idea behind a show, has made it easy for me to see the changes, to feel and hunch the new trends. Looking at a video of a show makes it much harder. A personal experience does make a difference. But then again, I am a trained designer.

HEIMTEXTIL TREND SHOW 2012



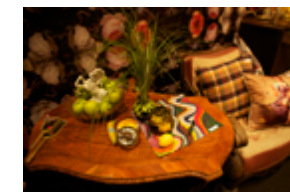
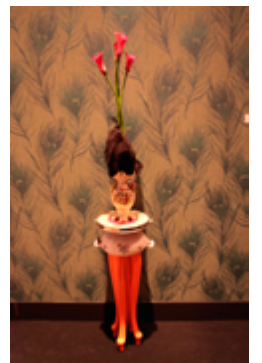
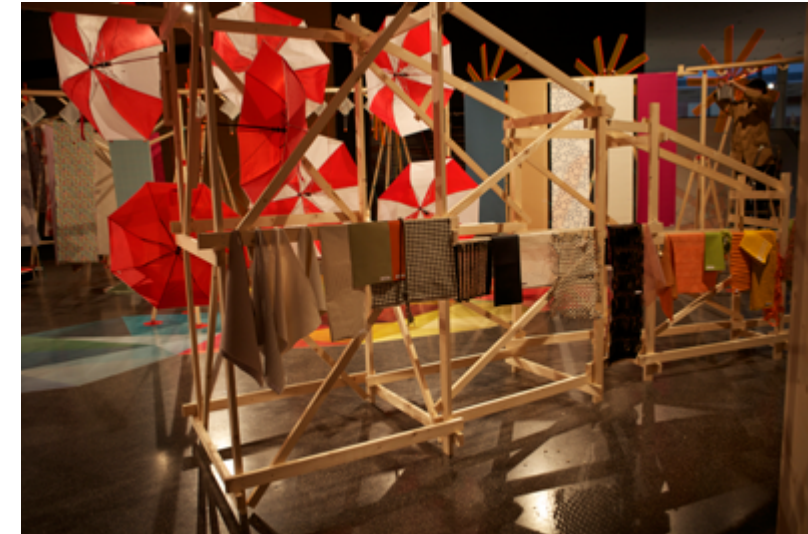
Here method C was applied: from materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition presenting textile trends with strips of textile materials. My conclusion is that having a personal experience makes trends easier to understand, especially when one is a professional with a trained eye and ability to use hunches helping to see the changes.

A visual trend show, representing the trends in their own context only, as well as having a guided tour with articulated words backing up an experience is not enough, when one is not an (intuitive) forecaster or a designer accustomed to notice slight changes or emerging trends.

4.2.6

THE VISIT TO HEIMTEXTIL TREND SHOW 2013

The Heimtextil Trend Show 2013 was a highly ambitious attempt. A rich, visual world was created using as a base strips of materials, the fair being a textile fair. But the four different trend themes were implemented with an ambient mood with furniture, art performances, light and shadows, furniture, objects, surrealistic and kitschy elements as well as music. A pianist was playing and in one of the “worlds” a fashion documentary was projected on one wall. Two artists were doing performances and so on. This time people were commenting that for once they understand what the chosen trends mean and are referring to. This seems to point to the direction I have been anticipating. The exercise reinforced my thoughts, a trend is comprehended more clearly when it is portrayed in a wider context, using ambient elements outside the general trend field it is about.



HEIMTEXTIL
TREND SHOW 2013

Using visual elements and backing up the idea with a multidisciplinary or at least a rich palette with many ingredients helps in getting the message through. When emotions are awakened with the presentation, it is even more effective.

The method D is applied here:

From materials to words, experiencing a trend exhibition personally, the exhibition being a staged world using a wide array of materials, furniture, objects, lights, music and art to create a special ambiance and to portray the trends from many angles= applying examples from different disciplines to the trend in order to enable the comprehension better.

4.2.7

QUESTIONNAIRE OF ANNE MARIE COMMANDEUR

In order to get more information from a professional point of view about the Heimtextil trends, a questionnaire was sent to Anne Marie Commandeur, the director of Stijlinstituut Amsterdam and this year's director of the Heimtextil Trend Table, in charge of the Trend Show as well as the Trend Book. She and her company has been a member of the trend panel for many years. A questionnaire was sent to her by e-mail asking her opinions of the things related to this study.

Anne Marie Commandeur explains first the process behind Heimtextil trends, the Forum and the Book. The fair invites a team of trend professionals whose work it is to research shifts in consumer mindset, social cultural context, economics, style, fashion, and technical innovations. Each team member brings in his or her own professional expertise. Each team represents a different country, so cultural diversities are also taken into account. The chosen team members gather for a two-day round table session organized by Heimtextil.

The role of the international team is to define how megatrends, big social cultural shifts as well as shorter term design trends and technical developments relate to consumer needs. The next step is to translate them into interior textile products and concepts for a specific season. The teams decide which trends will be most relevant for the specific season and to be elaborated afterwards for the Book and Forum. The conclusion of the meeting is a table full of materials (visuals, notes, inspiration textiles and materials) grouped in trends, listed keywords per trend, working titles and colour cards per trend. Then one of the agencies is invited by Heimtextil to elaborate the trends, to decide about titles, to produce a visual Trend Presentation, the Trend Book, and the actual design of the Trend Forum including the selection of the textiles that will be exhibited in the Trend Forum. This position circulates every year. Some years the approach is more functional, some years more emotional depending on who is behind the realization.

Stijlinstituut Amsterdam produced the Heimtextil Trends 2013-2014. It is the second time I have seen their work. Their implementation of the trends is always very rich, ambient and emotional. As mentioned before, in addition to the actual textiles, there was furniture, artwork, china, books and other props, even a musician playing the piano and singing opera, as well as a car and other objects that seemingly have nothing to do with fabrics and textiles. "Fabrics and textiles cannot be isolated from their context. It is important to maintain a more holistic approach when it comes to trends in textiles. This since these textiles are part of the full environment, of a period, part of a social cultural context and come close to people's intimate lives." Anne Marie Commandeur explains.

There has been a shift from the technology influenced 80's and 90's. That was reflected in high tech looks in textiles as well as interior environments and architecture. Rationality was more important than enchantment. Increasingly the story is as or occasionally even more important than the product itself. According to Commandeur this is very much due to the use of social media. At the moment, authenticity is the most important trend, as can be seen in the holistic, emotional approach of the trends this year.

Regardless to how ambitious the approach of the Trend Forum, not everyone comprehends the trends. Commandeur shared this view. Part of the reason is practical; the team has limitations with budgets, strategies of Heimtextil organization, space and time. Some of the reasons are more complex. Some products and concepts described do not exist yet. The target of the Trend Table is naturally to tell a sound and a clear story. The chosen route is showing trends driven by consumer mindset and attitude.

"We nevertheless realise it will never be clear for all audiences. There is no way to realize this. Some products and concepts are grouped in a way that might be totally illogical to professionals who work on a specific/limited link in the chain. In some cases the aesthetics or surface of things get all the attention, which might coincide or clash with for instance the technology behind, the resources chosen, the sustainable principles. The aesthetics might even ignore this, which might be shocking for people who are responsible for this link in the chain."

The trend language is also very specific. Keywords help to describe, explain, mark, label and border a trend. Commandeur thinks that if the language could be tailored towards a specific group for instance a group of textile technologist it would help people to understand the message better. However, that kind of service is impossible in an exhibition environment because not all the trends are relevant to everyone. Tailored approach would be most effective, but it is impossible to be able to connect their business case immediately to the stories. There will be regional differences, needs for different timing, budgets, access to technology or resources etc.

Commandeur points out that providing in-depth information around each trend would help people to understand them more. Highlighting trends from different perspectives is exactly what Stijlinstituut Amsterdam does. She adds that digging deeper into the matter helps. Offering pilot presentations, held by specialists with varying disciplines and backgrounds, might be one solution. It would be also very useful if the trends were translated per hall, per section and segment, maybe even region and the price level. To see how the trends apply towards the various exhibited products and concepts. She also suggests that the lecture program could be split between the four trends.

"It might be worthwhile offering lectures from specialists who talk about a specific Heimtextil trend but showing the relevance or ways to apply from a different and specialized perspective. For instance from a business, technical or design perspective, or providing functional input about sourcing, manufacturing capacity or finishing. Or highlighting opportunities for a sustainable future but then specifically targeted towards one of the trends."

When Stijlinstituut Amsterdam is working with their own clients the situation is different. They know exactly the business target, strategy and have an exact profile of their audience and the way they will use the information provided. They tailor their offering 100% to each client, which is why the result of their efforts has different contents as well as formats for each and every customer and project. One covering story links all and in-depth applied info and input for the various business segments.

Commandeur thinks it is useful for organizations to use trends in order to think about the consumer background. They can be used as a tool to communicate to all business areas. Trends also help to link and group developments and help to have a grid for product and concept development. Also in order to be innovative, to stay relevant and come up with desirable products that people are truly interested in that match their needs, mindsets, means and ways of life.

Commandeur agrees that people are inborn with curious creativity, an open mind and broad interest. She thinks these can be stimulated. Education can help people to develop and apply these skills. Critical awareness can be raised and stimulated. Communication, writing skills, systematics, etc. can be learned.

Education enables students to research, articulate, produce, present and debate forward thinking trends demonstrating a sophisticated and original translation of research into practice within the context of sustainable futures.

4.2.8

CONCLUSIONS.

Anne Marie Commandeur argues that fabrics and textiles cannot be isolated from a holistic context. Her company, being in charge of the Heimtextil Trends 2013-2014 illustrated that very clearly, as Stijlinstituut Amsterdam created a rich exhibition using references from furniture, objects, art and creating ambiance with music and lights. They managed to create an experience, which helped people to understand the trends represented. However, not all the trend professional think the same way; in previous years the exhibition has been carried out with a rational approach using mostly only strips of textiles, not paying so much attention to the holistic ambiance. Commandeur specifies, though, that in an exhibition it is impossible to realize a trend story that everyone would understand. Trend language is very specific, and talking about trends that do not exist yet, is hard for someone to identify with. A tailored in-depth approach by a professional towards a client helps to relate to the subject.

4.3

OUT-OF-THE-BOX -THINKING

As a conclusion from the above, trends are easier to comprehend when they are represented with visual images as well as examples or benchmarks from other fields. This makes sense, as a trend is never just a trend alone without a wider context. As a lecturer I have used this approach of linking details or examples from totally different fields together in order to find new angles towards looking into a challenge. When discussing with the fourth year fashion students about the subjects and ideas for their Bachelor's Thesis, I advised them to find an example from another field outside fashion to clarify their thoughts.

One student wanted to do a final year fashion collection applying a softer, more feminine approach to a Goth look, normally very black and dramatic. When she was asked to make a mood board relating to her ideas with pictures taken from another field, for example the interior world, rather than fashion, a fellow student commented finally understanding what the idea for this particular thesis collection was about. Sometimes ideas too close to home are difficult to portray.

The idea was to visualize the original idea from another angle as well as perhaps get new fresh approach to one's thinking. Out-of- the-Box-Thinking is used in organizations, this is a similar method.

The approach helped understanding from three different angles.

1. Thinking about a trend in a different context than usually might help.
2. Using visualizations, preferable also taken from multiple fields, helps presenting trends so that they are more comprehensible to others.
3. Applying a new, different context helps oneself to have a broader view of the subject and maybe gives some new thoughts or ideas.

4.4

‘TRANSPARENCY’ TREND AS
A HYPOTHETICAL CASE STUDY

To further open up the idea of presenting a particular trend so that it becomes more comprehensive and showing methods how a trend analyst can work, this study gives a hypothetical case study as an example. The angle is from a trend professional to a possible client. The idea of transparency and open source ideas seem to be expanding in the society. There are various examples of that; some of them are presented in this study.

Fashion business is not considered as being very open. On one end there are the cheap chain stores selling mass-market clothes at very low prices. One can only imagine under what circumstances the clothes are made. Every now and then news trickle through, revealing negligence and unethical processes. On the opposite end there are the luxury designer labels selling extremely good quality and highly expensive clothes. The discourse with those labels being how much one has to pay extra "air" just for the brand.

I have not come across many organizations in any line of business opening up everything about their company, like the manufacturing process, the profit etc. It is therefore interesting that the first example of that happens to be from the fashion world.

4.4.1

HONESTBY.COM

A fashion company called Honestby.com created by Bruno Pieters has made manufacturing of clothes financially and ethically transparent. Horton (2012) writes that every garment can be filtered for different criteria on top of the traditional information of material, size range and price. One can choose recycled, organic or European origin, even the carbon footprints of all the products are calculated. The details of every supplier chain from materials, buttons and manufacturing are listed. One can read how many employees a company has and how long it took to cut, sew and finish the piece of clothing. The price of every little detail is listed as well as the markup.

As mentioned above the fashion industry has been considered to be far from open source or transparent, yet it has been possible to create an organization like Honestby.com. Fair enough, the products sold at the web shop are not cheap, but that is not the issue here. Is this a sign of an emerging issue, change or a trend?





**BLACK AND OFF-WHITE
HERRINGBONE LINEN
SLEEVELESS WRAP DRESS**
honest by: BRUNO PIETERS
Vegan
European

honest note
Limited edition: 10 pieces

Bruno Pieters' chic black and off-white linen herringbone dress wraps beautifully around the body. This dress makes a romantic and modern statement. The dress is adjustable, it can be worn in different ways: tied in the front or in back depending on your body shape or mood. This garment has a French seam finishing.
To find out more about this design, please view the description.

Need style advice? E-mail our Honest by style consultants
advice@honestby.com

description

size & fit

€ 300,00 (incl. VAT/EU)
€ 247,93 (excl. VAT/outside EU)

34

[What size am I?](#)
Item measurements

Material information	>
Manufacturing details	>
Price calculation	>
Carbon footprint	>

Manufacturing details

Product code: BPS015F2024C055W
Product description: SLEEVELESS LINNEN WRAP DRESS

PATTERN

Company: Honest by BVBA
Design time: 14,5 working hours
Number of fittings: 3

GARMENT MANUFACTURING

Company: Bewico
Location: Ruisselede, Belgium
Address: Bruggestraat 105 – 8755 Ruisselede - Belgium
Owner: Mr Johan Christaens & Ma Coletter Bergez
Since: 1956
Number of employees: 18
Cutting time: 33 min
Assembly time: 205 min
Ironing: 10 min
Amount of pieces made: 10 pieces
Amount per size: 2 pieces

THIS GARMENT IS 100% MADE IN EUROPE FOR HONEST BY.

4.4.2

OPEN SOURCE SCIENCE

Aaltonen & Jensen (2012, 2013) suggest that an open source model from the programmer community might offer a solution to solve large-scale scientific problems. They think it might be a good idea to open problems to be processed publicly as long as it will happen systematically. It is important that people do not lose their immaterial rights, which means that new innovative licensing methods or official solutions should be found.

Crowd analysis, crowd evaluation, not to talk about crowd sourcing and crowd funding already exist. All these are assumable signs of growing transparency. Co-creating workshops are as well a way to design and solve challenges in a user-centered, more open manner.

4.4.3

THE OUTCOME OF THE
TRANSPARENCY CASE

Many things are happening in Finland as well. Politicians have had to start to open up the funds they have received towards the campaigns for the elections. A documentary by Katja Gauriloff (2012) called Canned Dreams is an example of globalized food chain, the film traces around the world all ingredients that go into a can of ravioli. A Finnish company called Hahmota creates "tax trees" where all the income and expenditure figures are opened up visualized in a tree form. Many municipalities are their clients.

All these examples can be assumed to tell about the shift towards a more transparent society. The recent scandal with horsemeat found in food products all over the world probably adds to the public opinion to appreciate openness and transparency. At least until the incident is forgotten.

Aaltonen and Jensen (2012) refer to the values becoming more feminine in the society. Could these feminine values be considered more open and transparent? Could that indicate a shift towards a more transparent society on the emotional level also?

There is also a shift towards a society where consumers participate in a more active and inclusive way. Restaurant days, urban gardening or guerrilla gardening and time bank system can be mentioned as examples of that. The petition for the right to marriage for homosexuals receiving over 100 000 names within 24 hours is also worth mentioning in this context. The more critical the public opinion gets, the more pressure there will be for corporations to react. There is also a shift towards the need of a more ethical and sustainable way of doing business and consuming. Taking actions before the main stream might be a wise move businesswise.

If a corporation is looking for new ways to increase competitiveness and to stand out from the competitors, one solution might be to increase transparency in processes where it is possible. Presenting this idea without further context, with just words, means nothing.

The society having a shift towards more transparent values sounds extremely vague and can be understood in many ways. Showing solid examples or benchmarks, using visuality as well as explaining what it could mean, might make the idea more comprehensible and decision making towards change easier. Even fashion related benchmarks, i.e. Honestby.com, could be taken as noteworthy examples, despite the shallow connotation of fashion in general.

4.5

THE NEED FOR A NEW, WIDER
APPROACH FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The world is in a breach, a lot of changes within the society are putting more pressure for organizations, the futures are always plural. Creating multiple scenarios can be of help in clarifying what actions to take.

Aaltonen & Jensen (2012, 158) contemplate that most managements books and consults content themselves for one truth or solution. They do not research the matters from multiple angles. The bottom line problem for management is the uncertainty. Decisions have to be made before one knows how the market develops or what is going to happen in the future. Usually there are a limited amount of scenarios used. Wider approach as described above in this chapter might help the decision-making.

4.6

THE ANALYSIS

This study has looked into the world of trends, how they trickle down pictured in Vejlgaard ´ s Diamond-Shaped Trend Model. Lynch & Strauss cite Field with trickling-up theory where as an example trends of a subculture go upwards. Sometimes a trend trickles across, meaning a fashion can be born in any socioeconomic class and spread sideways as Nuutinen cites Brannon. The literature has given knowledge in the vast, heterogeneous, context bound field and pointed out how trends are articulated, researched and by what kind of people. This study has been a learning process of several issues in connection with trends in general. The fundamental idea has been to create a tool and methods to offer easier access to comprehending and utilizing trends better.

One cannot predict the futures; there is no data of that. However, using specific data from many disciplines, from social, political and economical fields as well as from the past and the present, it is possible to predict some probable scenarios, and make assumptions based on facts, experience as well as hunches, intuition and tacit knowledge.

4.6.1

SEEING THE TRENDS

The literary review showed that several researchers are referring to Rogers' trickle-down theory. That looks into on how trends are considered to move or spread in the society and how people are divided into categories according to how innovative, daring, eager to adopt, interested or not interested they are. It is suggested that only 2,5% of the people of a population are actual innovators coming up with new trends or at least being the first ones to adopt them. The early adopters are following behind and representing only about 5% of a population, (Dumitrescu, Lynch& Strauss, Nuutinen, Raymond, Vejlggaard).

Having worked in the trend industry for many years, I have come across how heterogeneous the understanding, seeing or following trends is. There seems to be almost as many opinions on what is considered to be trendy within a certain context, as there are people. The process of how trends are born and the lifespan of them appear to be unclear. People seem to see and pay attention to different things. Sturken & Cartwright (2005) suggest that we are trained to read images in a certain way, with cultural codes mixed with aspects of gendered, racial as well as class-specific meanings and that we are often not even aware of the process of noticing social, cultural and historical meanings of images.

Personality and taste are also issues related to understanding trends. In relation to trend spotters Vejlggaard (2008) writes about people's personality not changing much over the years, unless there is a severe stressful situation or incident causing that. Raymond (2010) also points out that there are Intuitive Forecasters, who appear to come to conclusions without rational arguments or facts to back the knowledge.

At the same time, literature teaches various methods and processes to practice trend spotting and analysis.

Vejlggaard (2008, 1) refers to intuition being something one cannot learn. However, as he suggests intuitions being uncertain and unpredictable, he suggests analytical methods based on trend sociology to predict trends. As mentioned above, the literature offers methods encouraging people or organizations to learn trends spotting or weak signal spotting and analyzing techniques (Vejlggaard, Raymond, Dumitrescu, Hiltunen and Commandeur). Methods can be learned and put into practice. On an organizational level the challenge is that it requires a lot time, dedication from the management of and ample resources.

My conclusion is that it is possible to learn to recognize change and trends using systematical methods, as Vejlggaard and many others suggest, but only up to a certain point. To get to the core, becoming a trendsetter or a forecaster in this context has to do with the personality and talent in addition to learned methods, skills and experience. Gladwell (2005) writes about people coming to a conclusion with only slices of information, Takeuchi and Nonaka (1995) refer to tacit knowledge that cannot be articulated with words. Trend spotting is learning by doing and experience helps. However, I do not think one can learn to become an Intuitive Trend Spotter who notices the emerging trends or weak signals and can make a connection with other significant phenomena taking place in the society. The same applies to arts or any specific skills, not everyone can become an artist or a brain surgeon. This seems to be a research gap, one has not pointed out in the literature I have come across.

4.6.2

HYBRID TRENDS

Lynch & Strauss (2007, 67-68) cite Blumer when they express his disappointment in that trend analysis was a neglected area of study in 1969. Blumer accused sociologists of not being interested in paying attention to the impact of fashion on collective behaviour. Since then the situation has improved but the shallow connotation of the word “trend” still exists. Especially when dealing with trend analysis aimed to organizations the superficial connotation can be an obstacle as has been discussed before in this study. I have personally preferred to use the word phenomena and a change. Dumitrescu (2011) prefers to use the word foresight. It would be helpful if the connotation could be overcome in relation to trend research helping the organizations. It is interesting, though, that both in French and Italian the word “Trends” is “Tendences” and “Tendenze” which literally in English translate as “Tendencies”. Would simply choosing another word be of help?

Fast Company’s web magazine has an interesting article on Hybrid Thinking instead of (or in addition to) Design Thinking. Patnaik (2009) tells a story of the triumph of the revenue for Procter & Gamble under Claudia Gotchka, the first VP for design strategy and innovation. Her results have been a story of success of Design Thinking. It is pointed out that Gotchka is not a designer leading Design Thinking but an accountant with many years in marketing. Patnaik’s opinion is that Gotchka’s lack of experience as a designer has not made her a weaker proponent of design, but a stronger one as she has immersed herself in Design Thinking and then has merged it with her experiences in Account Thinking, Marketing Thinking and several more.

Patnaik claims he sees examples everywhere about what he calls Hybrid Thinking; people who are good in many areas. Hybrid Thinking is much more than hiring a multidisciplinary team. Hybridity matters as the problems companies need to solve are getting more complex. As an example Patnaik mentions people with many skills: A sculptor who is a filmmaker with a Ph.D in cognitive science, an MBA with degrees in Chinese language etc. (Patnaik 2009)

This article gave an idea that trends, (trend analysis), as a product should be hybrid in order to be more useful. This is not a research question for this thesis as such but it would be interesting to do some further research on this. The challenge is what to call a Hybrid Trend? A trend that can be looked at and analyzed from many points of view as has been mentioned; social, economical and political etc. linking with it as many aspects of interesting phenomena, reflecting a wider context to the society. To get rid of the unpleasant connotation of the term trend, Hybrid Trend might be a new word and a solution for this. For an organization that would mean getting a holistic picture of a change taking place.

Futurist Lidewij Edelkoort is interviewed for Samsung’s trend and design magazine Experience (2013,71) In this article Edelkoort says that in the future, people will act more like fluid liquid, broaden their thoughts outside the traditional boundaries and start to work in multiple professions. (Dokken, 2013, 71)

Raymond, (2008, 41) refers to forecasters being multitaskers. The process of detecting the required information, analyzing it and translating it into a easily perceived form could be called Hybrid Trend Analysis.

4.6.3

A SHIFT IN RECOGNITION

Trend research is definitely a growing business in connection with several industries from predicting fashion to strategic research trying to come up with innovations or in trying to solve social, political and economical problems. The good news is that, there seems to be a shift in the recognition of the trend analysis as a tool to solve new challenges within organizations or the society as the article in Helsingin Sanomat pointed out. HS wrote (30.11.2012) in their leader editorial "Nyt Suomi tarvitsee nörttejä ja trendsettereitä" that Finland needs trend noses and trendsetters in order to build a service architecture to raise [the country] from the difficult situation. It is the first time I have seen Helsingin Sanomat discussing trends in that context.

The growing discourse in design related processes and methods like Design Thinking, Service Design and Strategic Design have made these disciplines popular and easier to understand. That can also reflect on the awareness and appreciation of trend analysis in general, as utilizing trends is a valid and inseparable part of the design process for a designer. That could imply that utilizing trends will grow the same way as Design Thinking becomes more popular. Same challenges appear apply to both.

4.6.4

LACK OF CONCRETION

One of the main findings of this study is the observation that a significant problem of the trend field is the lack of concretion or context the trends are portrayed with. The blurry articulation of trends with words is another challenge, although it is a commonly used and valid way to describe trends in some environments like big fashion related fairs (Commandeur). The language, frequently referred to, as "trend language" is vague, even poetic, filled with metaphors and often articulated without any or not enough context. Commandeur also points out that when professionals interpret trends for a wide and heterogeneous audience like big fairs, it is in case impossible to exhibit them so that everyone understands.

As mentioned before being able to comprehend trends is also highly personal and subjective. Emotions and personality play a role in how trends are spotted and understood. In a highly visual field, visuality is not used systematically backing a trend. To add concretion, scenarios can be a good way in organizations as they can make one think of alternative futures and guide taking certain actions towards or at least anticipating and raising discussions of possible challenges and changes happening in the futures.

4.6.5

FROM TACIT KNOWLEDGE
TO KNOWLEDGE

Raymond refers to two separate issues that this study is looking into to. Firstly to hunches and intuition as part of trend forecasting and secondly to the question as why trends are considered difficult to understand in many levels.

For some people intuitive forecasting comes effortlessly. Raymond (2010, 68) suggests that Intuitive Forecasters are natural talents, like the exceptional sportspeople, scientists, artists and performers. These people apply physical, intellectual and emotional skills without effort and seem to come up the right solutions without rational data. In an organizational environment, that can cause problems or be unacceptable. Sometimes these decisions and solutions are difficult to argue or to articulate in a tangible way, as they are based on hunches and tacit knowledge. Raymond sees this as one of the reasons why outside the creative fields, intuitive forecasting is considered suspicious. Gladwell (2005, 50) writes about the thoughts and decisions that people make in the blink of an eye. He calls them snap judgments and suggests that they come from our unconscious and rely on a thin slice of experience. Gladwell (2005, 50) also suggests that when people reveal their thoughts and explain their thinking, especially if it comes from the unconscious, one should be careful in how one interprets their answers.

Nuutinen (2004, 118) cites Dessler suggesting that intuition is a cognitive process, within which a person makes an unconscious decision based on experience and information gained beforehand. Anyhow, I would argue that some people are not able to make intuitive decisions required for a forecaster no matter how much experience and information there is involved. As pointed out before, the innovators are only scarce 2,5 % of the population. On the other if a person is inclined to being intuitive, experience and systematic iterative processes help backing the intuitive ideas with argumentation and leading them towards something concrete. Not all intuitive ideas are of use to anyone.

As trends refer to the futures, they often deal with hunches, tacit knowledge and, intangible elements that can seem commercially suspicious. Especially for management in responsibility over the business, assumptions and information referring to the futures that do not exist yet, seems risky. However, tacit and intangible aspects are an inseparable part of trend analysis that have to be accepted. Futures related insight can never be completely backed with solid data, as the data does not exist.

Hunches are anyway usually based on knowledge, some of it tacit perhaps, experience, cultural education and a great amount of valid researched information of the past and the present. Learning by doing is part of the process. Trends do not happen in isolation. At an organizational level, the ability to use hunches is maybe not a thing to boast about, and it should not be used as the sole argumentation for a change. A change might require investments, so offering as open source, inclusive, tangible, visual package of the trend research in question as possible is the only way to back up the elements of intuition or hunches involved.

4.7

HOW COULD TRENDS BE TRANSLATED
TO MAKE MORE SENSE?

4.7.1

TRENDS WITH A BROAD CONTEXT
TO THE SOCIETY

Having worked with trends and having observed the field from several different angles for years I had formed a rather clear picture of the challenges related to trend analysis. The literature review reinforced my thoughts. The Mini Cases conducted added a small sample for the ingredients of this study, but nevertheless enhanced the assumptions of how trends are comprehended and what could be done to improve it.

One conclusion for this study is that trends need systemic translating by a trend professional (with intuitive skills) to be understood at least when an organizational collaboration is in question. When a trend gets explained with the context to other fields i.e. social, political and financial ones, it helps to gain insight of the matter. Giving existing benchmarks from varying fields of business as examples is another good tool to make trends concrete and more comprehensible. Sometimes the benchmarks and examples of change from totally irrelevant field can actually give new ideas and alter the way one thinks about a certain trend. The best trend presentations I have seen in various seminars have always shown an overview of change happening in other fields in the society, even if the presentation has been about the trends in fashion.

4.7.2

VISUALITY AS A MEANS TO ILLUSTRATE
TRENDS AS A TOOL FOR ORGANIZATIONS

It might not be possible to create a rich ambient exhibition when dealing with trends in an organizational environment. Using visual elements as a back up can be of help, though. As Hiltunen pointed out, especially within trend research visibility is not utilized enough (2010). We are heading towards a more visual world. As words are not enough, visibility is a crucial way to articulate trends. Using visual pictures and infographics is a basic element of understanding trends, but it has to be systemic. Visual mood boards are the basic element of designer's work. It can be used to show the process, as it is used in the design world or it can be used to back up the verbal articulation of trends. Data visualizations are an effective and fun way to pass information and to make it comprehensible. Using co-creating methods and organizing workshops can be effective occasions to apply additional visualization techniques. The visual process from the design world is a useful tool. Mood boards could be used more extensively.

4.7.3

TRUST

The issue of trust can be seen as an important element being able to use futures thinking in organizations. No matter how well the futures trends are backed with data, information from several fields and systemic visual elements, trends and change are always linked with intangible elements and hunches, that cannot be backed with solid data. As was pointed out in the literature review organizations are suspicious when intuitive forecasters seem to come up with solutions without being able to rationalize and to show proof. Certain amount of risk taking and dealing with the unknown will always be related to futures thinking and trends, though. If a forecaster is skilled enough and knows how to cluster and translate the findings into a more comprehensive, concrete and visual form mutual trust will probably increase in the long run. When using benchmarks from the fashion related world, extra care should be taken in backing the information with a holistic bigger picture, the connotation with fashion being extra suspicious. Raymond (2010, 5) says - *sapere audi* (dare to know) referring to an old phrase relevant today meaning that in a world where there is so much to know “Any decision to reject knowledge must be robustly challenged.”

Trends are about people and people have dreams. We are shifting towards user-centeredness in design and co-creation processes. Remembering emotions and dreams as a part of a trend analysis process is important. For something to become real there often is a dream behind.

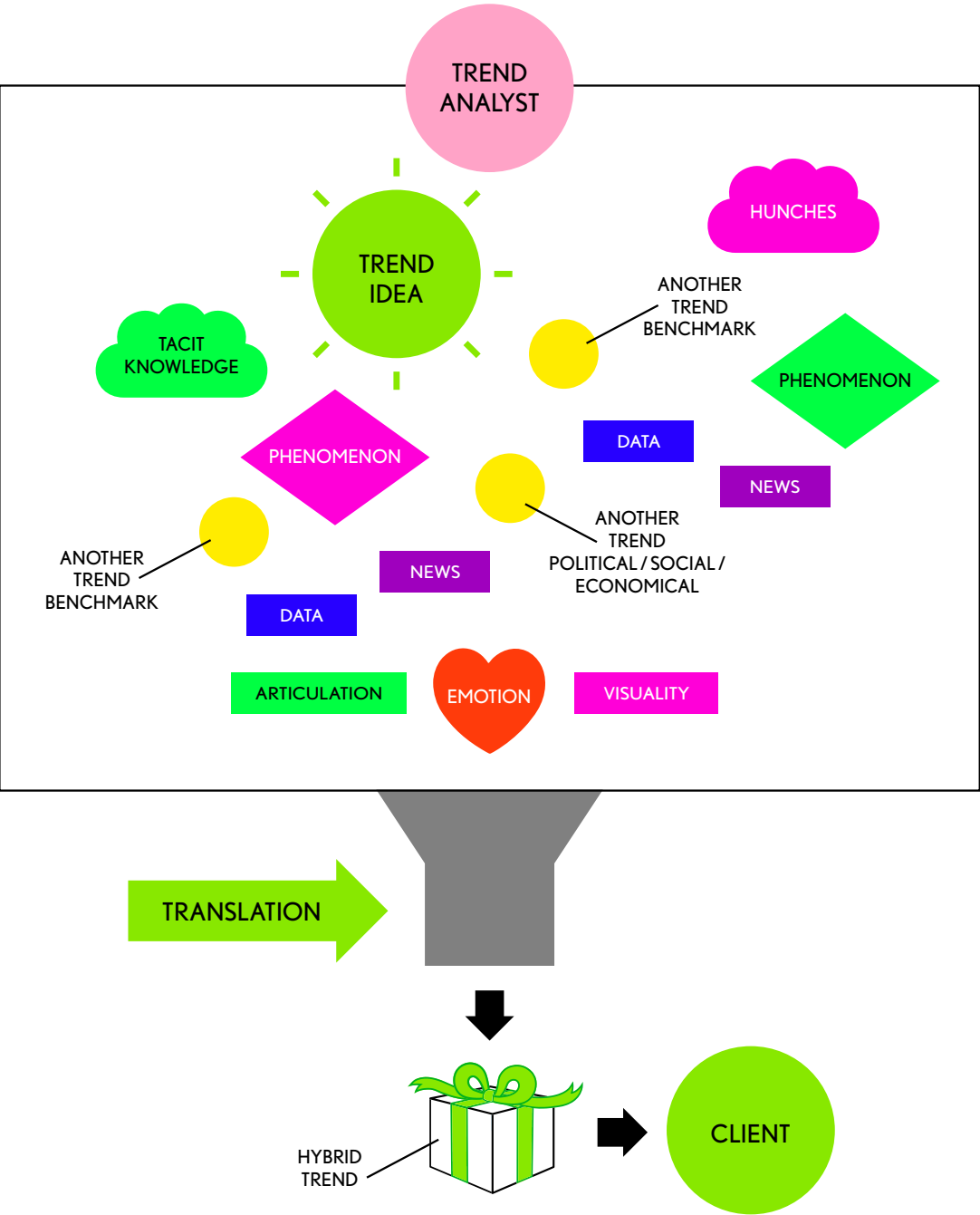
4.8

THE SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

The final result for this study is, that in order to use trends at their most effective way as a tool in an organizational environment, one needs a professional interpreter to get into the core of systemic trend analysis. Scanning a vast repertoire of current topics of the society and selecting the relevant information from an overflow of information in the world is a subject of its own. Finally the gathered information needs to be backed with visual elements. An element of emotion makes the impact stronger. One needs an intuitional forecaster for that, although the methods can be learned and utilized up to a point. The same applies to using trends at their best help for the organizations. The trends have to be offered in a certain form and way for the client to best understand them to make decisions dealing with change, innovation or the futures.

For that a hybrid trend process tool could be developed.

A graph of the ENNE hybrid trend tool process:



5. CONCLUSIONS

The field of trend research is incredibly fragmented, broad, context bound, heterogeneous and vague. The international field of trend research has also paid attention to it recently and has started to create networks to exchange insights with the aim to grow the trend and futures industry and to set up a framework within the industry.

An important issue is to understand who can spot trends and how. Comprehending trends and seeing change is highly personal and subjective. Even management level professionals or design students have different opinions of what trends are and how relevant they are in the first place. In theory, anyone can start a trend office and start consulting. Literature advises several methods encouraging organizations/people to learn trend spotting or weak signal spotting and analyzing techniques as Vejlgaard, Raymond, Dumitrescu, Hiltunen and Commandeur point out.

I find it contradictory that at the same time literature articulates trend spotters and early adopters belonging to the sparse 2-5% of a community. Raymond (2010) also writes about intuitive forecasters who seemingly come to conclusions without rational arguments or data behind. My understanding is that methods can be learned and put into practice up to a certain level. One can learn to pay attention to changes. One problem is that it requires a lot time, dedication from the management of organizations and a lot of resources. But to be able to find the core of certain trends and see aspiring change, one needs hunches and intuition, something one has within. Not everyone can become a surgeon or an artist either. The link with fashion is gnawing the image of trends being a serious field of research and business. A trend of a certain field is always in connection with other phenomena, values and changes taking place in the society. One definition for the kind of trends organizations could utilize could be the word Hybrid Trend, illustrating the multidisciplinary aspects what a particular trend is about.

The literature shows that there are dozens of methods to research trends. The terminology of Trend Analysis, Forecasting and Foresight seems to vary even among professionals all over the world. The field has many players with a totally different focus on the outcome, the field of business and research they are working with. There seems to be no clear articulation for anything, for the different disciplines nor the titles of the people working in diverse fields. That alone can cause suspicion in the organizations. How can anyone buy and utilize methods, tools or consulting if they do not clearly understand what it is about? Everything from a short-lived high fashion trend to serious decades lasting megatrends is called a trend. That alone can cause confusion.

The world is changing fast. The shifts in values, recession, climate change and the need for more sustainable and ethical methods to produce, manufacture and to sell products and services require new challenges to be tackled in organizations. Scanning information using user-centered methods, trend researchers and analysts might well provide help for organizations in making futures related decisions. From a possible client's point of view this study has found several reasons why it is so difficult to understand and utilize trends.

One of the main findings of this study is the observation that one of the biggest challenges of the multidisciplinary but vague trend field is the lack of common language and concentration on how the trends are represented, as the look into the current understanding of the field and the literature already showed. Another issue is hunches and tacit knowledge, both inseparable ingredients of trend analysis. Although a lot of futures related information is gathered from the past and present, solid data simply does not exist yet, when one is dealing with the futures.

The blurry articulation of trends with poetic words is another challenge and easily ends up giving different messages to different people. Trends seem to be a subject everyone has an opinion of. According to Vejlgard (2008) seeing trends is linked with personality, which is not easily changed. People feel, experience and see trends in a different way. Sturken and Cartwright (2005) suggest that we are trained to read images in a certain way, with cultural codes with aspects of gendered, racial as well as class-specific meanings, and that we are not even aware of these codes.

The understanding for this study for that is, that in order to use trends in their most effective way as a tool in an organizational environment, one needs a professional interpreter, with the ability to use hunches and tacit knowledge to get into the core of trend analysis. Trust can also be seen as an important element of using the futures thinking in organizations especially when there is no data or proof available. Certain amount of risk taking and dealing with the unknown will always be related to futures thinking and trends. Promoting mutual trust between trend professionals and management in organizations is essential.

Being a professional is not enough. For the trends to become more comprehensible, they need holistic systemic translation, as this study found out with the experiments of the Heimtextil exhibitions. Words are not enough on their own. Written text allows the reader to form a personal visual image in one's head, the same way one reads a book and recreates a visual world, that being different for everyone. Using single words, often specific "trend" language, which is often the case with fashion trends, used together with a set of pictures does not seem to help either. The questionnaire showed most students choosing totally diverse words when asked to select words describing best the same four trend categories.

Heimtextil fair arranges a big Trend Show every year. In 2012, when textile trends were represented with an exhibition showing mainly pieces materials and the visitors commented not understanding the ideas behind the trends. This year 2013, to promote the new textile trends, the Trend Exhibition was designed using furniture, objects, art, videos, music and light as well as the conventional pieces of textile fabrics creating four diverse, rich worlds with a holistic ambiance. This time visitors commented for once understanding the ideas behind the trends. Therefore it assumably helps to make trends more comprehensive using visuality and benchmarks or ideas from as many fields as possible. We seem to be going towards a more visual world anyway, with visuality the articulation can be made easier to grasp.

We are shifting towards a more emotional and user-centered society. Aaltonen and Jensen (2012) write that it is not possible to measure emotions but they can be felt and they advice people to understand the growing importance of emotional aspects in the choices of consumers. Creating holistic visual multidisciplinary entities with elements that touch emotions is probably the most effective way to make trends comprehensible.

The same applies to trends in general, they can also be felt and the question is can we afford not to make more use of them in the future?

6. FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has limitations in actual implementation of the gained insight. To actually improve the study into creating a working, concrete tool for organizations to use, a further research is needed.

Fashion being related to trends is partly the offender for the shallow connotation relating to the word "trend". It has not been a research question for this study but for a long time I have felt that fashion related trends work as a source to see change in a broader meaning related to futures and the changes society. As Commandeur mentioned, trends are always a part of a bigger picture and they (fashion or any trends) cannot be separated from the rest of the cultural, economical and political shifts, changes of values or consumer behaviour within the society.

Along with this study this hunch has become stronger. Organizations often use benchmarks from their own line of business, it might be beneficial to use any visual benchmarks as long as they can be translated into relevant information.

The fashion and design world work in very fast cycles. At the same time there are a lot of controversies happening. Big manufacturers try to sell fashion cheaper and cheaper, faster and faster whereas young designers are highly critical about ecological and ethical issues relating to manufacturing of design. Consumers are growing more critical and at the same time there is a growing phenomena for them to be taken along to design processes i.e. with crowd sourcing. There are interesting shifts in consumer behaviour in relation with fashion and design or what is considered to be luxury etc. Organizations in all the steps of the manufacturing and selling process of fashion and design have a growing pressure to move towards more sustainable, ethical and transparent methods and processes. Similar pressures might spread wider in the society. All this makes further research tempting.

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APPENDIX

4.2.2

QUESTION 1. WHAT IS MOST DIFFICULT IN UNDERSTANDING TRENDS? ANSWERS:

- 1A. "It is difficult to anticipate what is going to be "in" for the big masses, to know own opinion versus the mass opinion."
- 2A. "The accidental randomness of trends. What leads to something becoming a trend?"
- 3A. "The constant changing and living through them."
- 4A. "The trends changing so fast and why is it that some trends stay for years and some are just shooting stars."
- 5A. "To adopt new shapes. To see the beauty in something that was considered ugly before."
- 6A. "Trends change often and they partly are other people ´s opinions. Some people think something is trendy, some think something else. There is no one truth."
- 7A. "It is difficult to understand where trends come from and how something becomes a trend."
- 8A. "How so many things can be fashionable the same time and they are often total opposites, like pastel colours and neon colours. In is also unbelievable that designers suddenly come up with same ideas and everyone is doing the same."
- 9A. "How are trends born and why suddenly everyone dresses the same."

- 10A. "How a trend is born and how does it get the final form."
- 11A. "How are trends born, who/what decides the trends?"
- 12A. "The quick cycle and extent of trends."
- 13A. "To know what others like, to "give in" to new trends= to be open minded enough."
- 14A. "The quick cycle but at the same the permanence of some trends and the repetition season after season."
- 15A. "There is nothing difficult for me in understanding the trends."
- 16A. "How they change, worldwide, when the changes are fast."
- 17A. "It maybe most difficult to get the trends to the awareness the big masses. I come from a little village, where everything different is wrong and not approved until at least 50 people wear the same shoes etc."
- 18A. "The sort of trends that I could not imagine wearing myself. I personally like many mainstream trends and I can imagine myself in them."
- 19A. "How quickly a trend is born and dies. When something stops being trendy."
- 20A. "It is difficult not to copy trends directly but to use one ´s own creativity. One must be able to apply the trends right to a certain target group, and that can be difficult."

4.2.3

QUESTION 2. DESCRIBE THE WORD "TRANSPARENCY" AS A TREND IN AS WIDE CONTEXT AS POSSIBLE? ANSWERS

- 1B. "Transparency as a trend means that many areas like art and street styles melt into one and there are no more clear divisions between them."
- 2B. "For me transparency only reminds the corporate world. Organizations and decisions have to be transparent :). In fashion, concrete transparency feels cheap."
- 3B. "Transparency as a trend reminds me of see-through shirts that are in fashion right now."
- 4B. "Transparency can be concrete for example in fabrics or broader in the decision making of the management of a company or in ethical views."
- 5B. "Transparency - the client being aware of the company & the product. So that the thought of the artist becomes visible."
- 6B. - (She did not answer this question.)
- 7B. "Clothes and transparent or see-through fabrics come to my mind first. One can also think about the transparency of things or matters."
- 8B. "Transparency, that the background information of the designer, the company are bare, the process of how the clothes are made has to be bare."
- 9B. "Transparency for myself means a chance, versatility."
- 10B. "Transparency in material, layers, for instance see-through fabrics under which you can see the underwear, which might also be see-through."

- 11B. "Transparency is a phenomenon, which has become popular. One is aware of where from everything is born, how it is made. How it will affect to everything? One tries to make transparency popular."
- 12B. "The trend transparency brings to my mind light materials, translucency, fluid, sensitive materials and some kind of simplicity."
- 13B. "At the moment I am actually thinking about transparent clothes as they are fashionable and I happen to be wearing a transparent shirt. But otherwise it is a relevant word everywhere now. For instance what costs what in certain products."
- 14B. "I have a see-through bag made of plastic and I like the possibility of making an impact with the contents of my bag. Transparent materials are translucent in a beautiful way and they glow in the light."
- 15B. "The trend of transparency is sexy layering without showing too much, it is a possibility to style clothes to look new, for instance new undershirt/ bra/ jacket on top or without. Transparency is also softer and not so official as a basic shirt."
- 16B. "Transparency? -Predictable, self-evident."
- 17B. - (She did not answer this question.)
- 18B. "Mixing materials so that transparent materials have a role."
- 19B. "Translucent materials, slightly revealing cuts, with good taste, though. In the interior and design world using plastic and glass"
- 20B. "Transparency as a trend is transparency of materials, for instance a bag is made from a transparent material, so you can see the contents or underwear can show underneath a shirt."

4.2.4

QUESTION 3. CHOOSE THREE KEY WORDS BEST DESCRIBING EACH FOUR TREND THEMES

heimtextil, trends 2013/2014		
historian		tulokset
1	craftmanship	2
2	enchantment	
3	storytelling	12
6	richness	12
7	embellishment	1
8	opulent	
9	ornate	2
10	detailed	11
11	quilted	
12	embroidered	3
15	metallic	4
16	gold	2
17	armour	1
18	embossed	
19	ornaments	4
20	lace	7
21	openwork	1
22	filigree	
23	silk sheen	2

24	jacquard	
25	pearlescent	
26	futuristic crafts	
27	laser cut	4
28	carved	
29	oriental flavour	1
eccentric		
1	flamboyance	2
2	passion	5
3	decorative	8
4	arts&crafts	7
5	curiosities	2
6	unique	10
7	origin	4
8	folkloric	4
9	exotic	5
10	tribal	
11	poetic	2
12	eclectic	
13	timeless	3
14	light-hearted	
15	humour	4
16	suiting-inspired	
17	herringbones	
18	flowers	3

19	chintz	
20	oriental	2
21	patterns	6
22	accessories	2
24	patina	
25	trims	
26	floating yarns	
27	feathers	
28	gobelin	
inventor		
1	challenging	8
3	performing	5
5	smart	9
6	wellness	1
7	entertainment	5
8	sensorial	1
9	kinetic	
10	interactive	4
11	fun	11
12	play	7
13	experiential	5
14	decorative	
15	dimensional	
16	tactile	
17	openwork	1

18	grids	
19	bonded	
20	welded	
21	comfort	
22	soft	1
23	foamy	
24	moulded	
25	padded	
26	technical	8
27	iridescent	
28	featherweight	1
29	iluminative	1
geologist		
1	explore	3
2	imperfections	2
3	geological	10
4	organic	13
5	erosion	
6	oxidation	1
7	science	5
8	surreal	8
9	distorted	
10	gradient	
11	venomous	1
12	marled	

13	viral	1
14	iridescence	
15	metallic	7
16	crystals	
17	reflections	2
18	plissés	
19	jacquard	
20	leather	1
21	paper	
22	bark	
23	mineral	2
24	ores	
25	copper	2
26	raw	7
27	rustic	4
28	traces	
29	granulated	
30	crackled	
		275